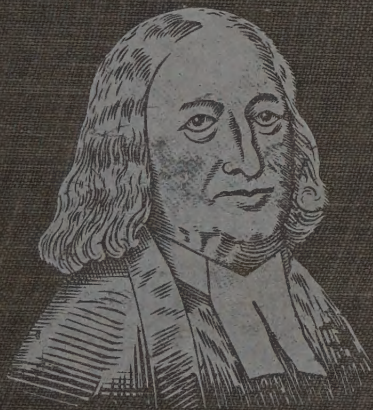


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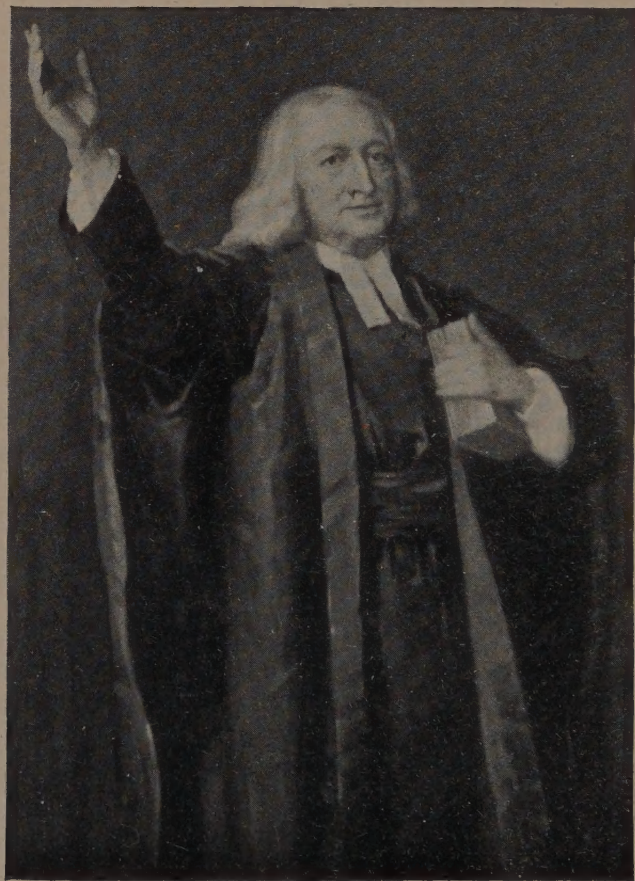


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THE STORY OF A WONDERFUL LIFE;

OR,

PEN PICTURES

OF THE MOST INTERESTING INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF
THE CELEBRATED

JOHN WESLEY.

Adapted to the Tastes and Wants of Young People

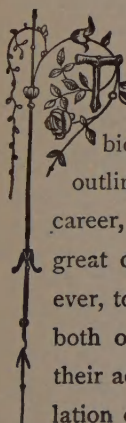
By DANIEL WISE, D. D.



CINCINNATI: JENNINGS & PYE
NEW YORK: EATON & MAINS



PREFATORY NOTE.

 HIS volume is offered to the young people of America, not as a complete biography of John Wesley, but as an outline of the most marked incidents in his career, and a sort of crayon portraiture of his great character. It contains sufficient, however, to give them a tolerably full conception both of the man and his deeds—to excite their admiration of the former and their emulation of the latter.

The writer makes no pretense of having any new or private sources of information. His materials were derived from such authors as Moore,

Southey, Watson, Wesley's Journals, Kirk, Tyerman, etc. As there are few references to authorities in the body of the work, I wish to say here that I have been specially indebted to that most elaborate work on Wesley hitherto published, "The Life and Times of John Wesley," by the Rev. L. Tyerman, for facts, and for brief extracts which, though not credited, are contained in quotation marks; as are extracts from Wesley's Journal, and other authors, wherever made.

This work is not a mere compilation. While its facts have all been previously published, its arrangement, style, grouping of incidents, and interpretations of fact, are the author's own. Should its perusal excite a desire for a more complete acquaintance with its illustrious subject, the young reader is referred to the works named above, and also to that most able and delightful work, "The History of the Religious Movement of the Nineteenth Century, called Methodism," by Abel Stevens, LL. D.; a charming book, which every young student of Church history may profitably study.

I have only to add, that if these pages should

inspire any young heart with a measure of that spiritual heroism, that fidelity to God, that broad and gentle charity for mankind, and that rich experience of the Divine life, which gave grandeur and power to the character of Wesley, my highest aim in writing them will be attained.

DANIEL WISE.

ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY, 1873.





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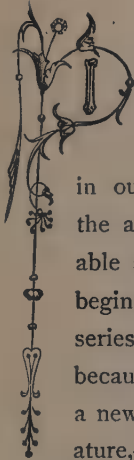
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INTRODUCTION.

BY BISHOP HAVEN.



T is with especial pleasure that we accept the invitation to write a prefatory note to this new venture in our Church literature; both because the author has crowned a life of remarkable success in this department with this beginning of what, we trust, will be a long series of similiar publications, and also because he has thus initiated successfully a new departure in our Sunday-school literature,—not that others have not previously essayed this, but it has been given to him to here make the essay triumphant. Our Church

heroes and history are at last to be adapted to our Church readers. We have sparkling biographies and histories, which the world, no less than the Church, admires. We have had a thorough treatment, by both friend and foe, of our founder under God, and of his associates and followers. But these works have been "caviare to the multitude." They have reached not the many, but the few. Of the last, and not least, of these biographies, there have been sold only two thousand copies. What are these among so many millions of our own people, and the many more that are interested in the beginnings and growings of this Church of Christ? It was time that "the story of his life, from year to year," should be told by one competent to bring it before the youthful, which is the reading, multitude. It was time that the masses of the Church should know the story of the Church.

This has here been happily accomplished. What has been done by another writer for youth in the biographies of famous men of European and American history, has here been done for the

chiefest of Europeans since the Christian era, whose influence and power in this land also surpasses any American ; for Washington is less than Wesley, even in the country which call him Father.

Dean Stanley has lately declared, in his lecture on his Life at Oxford, that he towers immensely over all his followers. He is equally pre-eminent over all his critics, however patronizingly they approach him ; and over all his fellow-collegiates, however haughtily they have hitherto disdained him. Isaac Taylor, Southey, Stanley, every non-Methodistic student of his life, sinks into pigmyism beside his majestic greatness ; and his university will yet be compelled to declare that the stone they have so long rejected is the chief stone of their corner. They may carve marble statues and paint memorial windows to their many scholars and preachers of renown ; but no one of them—not even the saintly trio who, in her own chief square, gave their bodies to be burned ; nor the greatest of those reformers, he who put the Bible into English, and into the English nation—can

surpass, or equal, in fame and influence this son of Christ Church, Lincoln, and Exeter. Wyclif and Wesley, five hundred years apart, are the chief glory of Oxford; and the latter was not ■ whit behind the former—nay, far before him—in the formal results of his life. He will yet be the most honored of her sons at home, as he has long been in the world at large.

This vivacious sketch of his character and life will, we trust, be followed by not a few like portraits of his associates. For, despite Mr. Stanley's depreciation of these men, it will be found they were worthy marshals of this more than Napoleon. When his studies shall have led him farther into this field, he will treat with equal candor and admiration the labors of that other great Oxfordite, Whitefield, the yet unrivaled pulpit orator of all time; or that first and still foremost of missionaries, Coke, of whom Punshon well says, he had "the great sea for his sepulcher;" or that recognized chief Biblical scholar of his age, Clarke; or that wittiest, godliest, shrewdest, and best-tempered of disputants, Fletcher; or that broad-sweeping,

deep-searching theologian, Watson; or the most cultured, ringing, and rapturous of all hymnists who has ever arisen in the history of the Church to inspire her troops, and to lead them forward,

“At the head of the march to the last new Jerusalem,”

that other Christ Church Oxfordite, Charles Wesley. He will see that these, and others less known to fame, were worthy to work together with John Wesley, in building up the greatest ecclesiastical structure of modern ages.

If he should then pursue his studies on the other side of the Atlantic, he might find in Asbury a hero worthy of his best pen—a fit Achates for that pious Æneas who organized victory for Christ over all this continent; who knew how to modify his English birth and Wesleyan tactics to meet the characteristics of the American people: the only great foreigner in this land that has ever learned that most difficult lesson, how to lose his original, in his adopted, nationality. Hamilton never quite lost the foreigner in the native, as his ideas of government and loss of popularity clearly showed. Nor has one since appeared, among all

our adopted countrymen, who has found the secret of success in this perfect acclimation. There was no need of prohibiting in the Constitution the accession of such persons to the headship of the nation. They prevent their own success. And if they can, by any conformity, earn the headship, they should be allowed to possess it.

Asbury is our only foreign-born resident that is universally revered as if this were his fatherland. He early caught the instinct of the true American; and whether before, in, or after the War of Independence; whether among the political or ecclesiastical rulers,—he was, like Paul (hardly his superior apostle), himself a Gentile among Gentiles.

Others of those and of later times will also merit portraiture from critical and filial pencils. Garrettson, the gentleman; Lee, the wit and orator; Hedding, the calm-brained and strong-brained; Fisk, the Fletcher of American Methodism; Soule, the Michael of the pulpit, tallest of our archangels in the proclamation of the Gospel; Orange Scott, the stalwart arouser of a slumber-

ing Church, whose eloquence was only equaled by his heroism, and each was excelled by his devotion to the slave: who had put his own Church and conferences in all New England, as a body, into the front rank of Abolitionists, before any other Church organization, and almost before any other individual minister, had attained that grace,—surely, there is a field here for the facile pen that has drawn this spirited sketch of the leader of this mighty militant host of the Lord Jesus.

Not the least benefit, we trust, that will accrue from this publication, will be the beginning of a new style of Sunday-school literature. It is time that the fictitious trash that has so long burdened our book-shelves, and even heavily burdened our children's brains and hearts, should give way for more truthful writings. All books for children should lead them up to higher works in their several departments. As primary readers, geographies, and arithmetics should be so arranged as to prepare and allure the childish student to higher literature and higher sciences, so should Sunday-school books be so composed as to train and

attract the reader to higher works in their several spheres. What are the higher works to which an infantile fiction will educate? Not true histories, nor biographies; not scientific studies, nor theological; but only to maturer fictions, to novels and romances, and all such mind and soul debilitations. They should have science so popularized and Christianized, that they should be led to the broader treatments of nature; they should have lives of good men so told, that they will crave larger researches into the same; they should have theology so taught, that the Catechism will be a delight, and the truths of the Gospel will be as confectionery, sweet unto their taste. Then will they eagerly pursue the subtlest and loftiest paths of divinest lore.

This volume will contribute to that reformation. May it be followed by many such, from many pens in every line of enticing truth, so that our coming youth may grow up with desires for deeper studies in all the words and ways of the Lord; so that, too, those who seek to feed them with literary food may make truth, and not fiction,

the way, as well as the end, of their compositions! They will themselves be greatly blessed and braced by such a purpose. They will have to study before they write, know something before they pretend to say something, fill their own minds before they seek to fill the minds of children. They will not proceed, with scraps of paper and a feverish fancy, to create feeble children of an empty brain, as is too often the case to-day, but will have to prepare, by amplest study, for the task that is set them. Thus will they show, as this book does, a thorough acquaintance with all the literature pertaining to the topic they treat.

Then will our youth be fed with food convenient for them, and grow up in a clear knowledge of the fathers and mothers of the Church; not alone of its latest born, but of all its elder kindred—those of the Reformation, of the mediæval age, and of the primitive times. They will seek further knowledge in all departments of true research, and grow in wisdom, as in stature, in favor with God and man.



THE
STORY OF A WONDERFUL LIFE.

Chapter I.

FIRST FIVE YEARS OF WESLEY'S LIFE.

PICTURE in your mind, my young reader, a straggling little village, situated pleasantly enough on the "slope of a gentle hill." The houses on its half-dozen irregular streets are modest structures, built mostly of brick, and covered with red tiles. Yonder, on the north, see an ancient stone church, with its old gray tower half hidden among some grand old elm and sycamore trees. There is nothing striking

about it ; but we will enter its door-way, and mount to the top of the tower. Looking down, we perceive that this village stands in the center of a little islet, formed by three rivers—the Don, the Idle, and the Torn—and an ancient ditch, which connects one of these streams, the Idle, with the River Trent. Lifting our eyes toward the north and west, we see low, dull hills, filling the horizon. Turning to the south and east, we behold in the distance countless acres of salt-meadows stretching far away toward the shores of the German Ocean. Nowhere can we pronounce the prospect either picturesque or beautiful.

Let us descend from the tower into the streets, and take a peep at the inhabitants. We find about two thousand people living here. We inquire after their occupation, and are told that they are worthy cultivators of the rich meadows around the village ; thrifty, well-to-do, plain people generally, with nothing to distinguish them from the villagers in the towns about them.

“Surely,” you exclaim, “there is nothing remarkable or note-worthy about this place !” No,

nothing whatever, so far as respects its beauty, wealth, buildings, inhabitants, or even its history, except in just one thing. But that one thing has made the name of this obscure place a household word in almost every quarter of the globe. Yes: this mean village of EPWORTH is "world-renowned," solely because it was the birthplace of A MAN. The name of that man was JOHN WESLEY.

There is a little village hidden among the hills of Galilee, so insignificant that its name is not once found in the Old Testament; yet its fame has gone abroad among all nations, solely because a greater than John Wesley, even John Wesley's and our Savior, spent most of his youthful days within its walls. The fact that the feet of Jesus trod its streets has made it illustrious. In like manner, the glory of Epworth is derived from its having been the early home of the celebrated founder of Methodism.

It is not surprising that the presence of Jesus at Nazareth, during so great a portion of his life, has made its name dear to millions of hearts; for to him belonged both the greatness of a heroic man

and the grandeur of a God. He could not touch any thing, not a child even, without making it sacred. But it is a rare thing for a mere man to give celebrity to his birthplace. Something more than greatness is required to accomplish this. The world has seen many great men whose early homes and haunts have no place in people's hearts; but when goodness and greatness are united in a man's character, the places in which he drew his breath and learned the lessons by which he grew into his high estate, become dear to the affections of his admirers and followers. Now, inasmuch as John Wesley's association with Epworth and its parsonage has given them a world-wide celebrity, and sanctity even, there must have been something greatly good in his life, his actions must have been very extraordinary, and you can scarcely be without a strong curiosity to know what he was and what he did—what made him so illustrious and so well-beloved. If you will read this volume through, you will learn the interesting secret.

Now, let us go back to Epworth, and see what was going on there one hundred and seventy years

ago. It was not quite so large a place then, as we saw it to be just now. The land around it had been just drained, and raised from a condition little better than a swamp, and the people were generally rude and poor; many of them, indeed, little better than "Christian savages." But our business is at the rectory, or parsonage. We shall find it on the High or principal street, standing in a three-acre lot, some hundred feet back from the sidewalk. It is three stories in height, and is built with rough timbers, with plaster between them. Its roof is thatched with straw. Its windows are small casements, filled with little diamond squares of glass, set in lead. If not the best house, it is one of the best, in the village.

Supposing that we are in Epworth on the 17th of June, 1703, we shall find quite a stir in the rectory. There have been vague whisperings among five of the six children in the household. Several rosy-cheeked matrons have been seen going in, wearing mysterious faces; the doctor has been there, and has gone again with a self-satisfied air. The fact is, a baby has been born in the rectory

to-day, and we are there just in time to go, in fancy at least, with the good rector and his children, into Mrs. Wesley's chamber, to see the new-born babe.

The shades are down; but, dim as the light is we can make out to see the little red-faced bit of humanity, wrapped in homespun flannel, lying on the nurse's lap, utterly unaware of the interest he excites, or of the work he has come into the world to do. Around him are his brother and five sisters. Of these, the sprightly Samuel is thirteen years old; the beautiful Emilia is twelve; the frolicsome Susannah, eight; the deformed but much petted Mary, seven; the studious Mehetabel, six; and baby Anne, in a sister's arms it may be, scarcely old enough to comprehend what her sisters mean when they playfully allege, as we may imagine they do, that "baby John has put her nose out of joint."

Behind this group, and overlooking them all, is the somewhat spare but well-knit form of Samuel Wesley, the baby's father. A student's cap covers his noble head. His face is smooth, and guiltless

like of beard and whiskers. His clear, keen eyes look lovingly on the child. He has a Roman nose, lips which suggest that he is a man who can stick to his purpose, a beautifully rounded chin, and a clear complexion. His face proclaims him no common man. His history shows him to have been one of the most marked men of his age.

The slender, pale-faced mother smiles feebly from her bed upon the family group. She looks like a lady given to much thought. Whether we should pronounce her beautiful or not, if we saw her up and in health, it is impossible to say; for her biographers are not agreed on this point. Of this only we are sure: her character was as noble as her descent—she had high-born blood in her veins—and she was one of the best and wisest of mothers.

To this new-born babe his mother gave the name of John Benjamin, to distinguish him from an elder child named John, who had died before this one was born. But his second name, Benjamin, was never used. The world knows him only as John Wesley.

As Master John will do little else for some time to come than to eat, drink, sleep, grow, and cry *softly*—for his mother never allowed him or any of her children to cry *loudly*, after they were a year old; though how she prevented it, no living soul can tell—we will leave him awhile with his nurse, and find out who and what sort of persons his father and mother were. Knowing, as you do, that this babe became a very celebrated man, and that he had a younger brother, Charles, who was also greatly distinguished, you can scarcely be without a desire to know something about their parents.

John Wesley's father was Samuel Wesley. He came from a good stock. His father and grandfather were heroic ministers, who suffered much for conscience' sake in the troublous times during which they lived. His father died young, leaving a widow and two sons, Matthew and Samuel, very poor.

Samuel was fifteen years old when left fatherless. Generous friends kept him at various schools in Dorchester and London, until he was twenty-one. They wished and expected him to become

a Dissenting minister, as his father had been. All his studies and expectations were in that direction. His friends were all hostile to the Church of England. He thought and felt as they did, until, being desired to use his pen against the ministers of that Church, he carefully studied its character and claims. These studies changed his views, and he resolved to enter a college at Oxford, and become an Episcopal minister.

This was a serious step for the penniless young man to take. Such was the bitterness of feeling then prevalent between the adherents of the Church and Dissenters, that Samuel knew he would be utterly forsaken by all his old friends. He knew no one who would stand by him in making the change. His whole fortune consisted of a sum not exceeding *ten dollars*, and of a quantity of clothing and a few books so trifling that he could pack them all in a single knapsack! Yet he bravely took the important step, because he felt it his duty to do so. The same heroic fidelity to conscience which made his grandfather and father endure persecution from the friends of the Epis-

copal Church, led him to cast his lot within her pale. All honor to the noble youth, as well as to his equally noble ancestors !

Behold this young man, then, quitting London on foot, burdened with the knapsack containing his little stock of earthly goods ! Patiently, hopefully, he plods his weary way, fifty-five miles, to Oxford. There he gains admission as *servitor*; that is, he became servant to some wealthy student for the sake of his daily bread. He was entered among the lowest class of students—the poor scholars with respect to condition. Still he held up his head. His self-respect sustained him ; for he knew that such poverty as his was honorable. He worked hard at his studies. He helped such students as had more gold than brains ; he also wrote for the booksellers, and thus earned money with which to purchase clothing and other necessities. Thus, year by year, he pushed his way, “paddling his own canoe,” through five years, until he honorably won his degree of B. A., or Bachelor of Arts, and graduated, with fifty dollars in his pocket.

With the example of Samuel Wesley before his eyes, is there any intelligent youth in America who will shrink from seeking a collegiate education solely because he is poor? Away with such shrinking! It is cowardice. The poorest boy in this land of many opportunities can work his way to and through college, if he resolutely wills to do so.

This same bravery of spirit was illustrated in a different way when Samuel Wesley was in a London coffee-house, one day, taking refreshments. A colonel of the guards, sitting near him, was swearing fearfully in his conversation with some military friends. Young Wesley was shocked. Calling the waiter, he said :

“Waiter, bring me a glass of water !”

The water was brought in. In a loud, clear voice, Wesley said :

“Carry it to that gentleman in the red coat, and request him to wash his mouth after his oaths?”

The profane man heard him. He became furious, and made a wild attempt to rush on his

reprover. But his companions restrained him, one of them saying :

“Nay, Colonel, you gave the first offense. You see the gentleman is a clergyman.”

Upon this, the soldier pocketed the affront, as he deemed it. It did him good, however. Years after, he met his reprover in St. James’s Park, and, after recalling the above scene to his memory, said :

“Since that time, sir, I thank God, I have feared an oath, and every thing that is offensive to the Divine Majesty. I could not refrain from expressing my gratitude to God and to you.”

These honorable facts give you some idea of the sort of man to whom God gave the babe we saw, just now, at the Epworth Parsonage. He was a good, learned, heroic Christian minister. He had been rector of the old church with the gray tower about seven years when his son John was born.

Of Samuel Wesley’s sweet wife, Susannah, it is only necessary to say, that she was the daughter of another of those heroic ministers who suffered the loss of all things, because they would

not conform to laws which they, very properly, considered to be hostile to Christian liberty. Her maiden name was Annesley. Her ancestors were of noble blood ; and of her it may be briefly said that, for learning, patience, maternal wisdom, and Scriptural piety, she was as noble as any among them, if not, indeed, the noblest of them all. We shall meet with her and her hard-working husband, the Rector of Epworth, many times before our story is ended.

We will now suppose "little Jacky," as he was called in the home circle at Epworth, to have reached the close of the first year of his eventful life. Strange to say, he had already learned one practical lesson from his loving but firm and thoughtful mother ; namely, *that it was useless to cry for any thing he wanted*. She had taught him this first practical lesson of life by resolutely refusing to give him any thing for which he cried. This was a hard lesson for the mother to teach and for a babe to learn ; but, once learned, it doubtless saved her much trouble, and him much restlessness and many tears.

As soon as "little Jacky" could speak, he was taught to repeat the Lord's Prayer. Behold him, from that time, kneeling, with folded hands and closed eyes, morning and evening, first at his mother's knee, and, when old enough, at his bedside, offering that beautiful prayer to his Father in heaven! At a later period, he was taught to add a few simple petitions for his father and mother.

As the boy grew, he learned new lessons of life, both by precept and by training. If he committed a childish *fault*, and confessed it, he was freely forgiven, and no one was permitted to upbraid him for it afterward. If he tried to do his best at any thing given him to do, no matter how poorly it was done, he was always praised; never blamed, never laughed at. For every act of obedience which cost him any sacrifice of his inclinations, he was warmly praised and frequently rewarded. Had he been guilty of *vices*, such as lying, cheating, or calling wicked names, he would have been punished with the rod, according to the invariable rule in that model household; but there

is good reason for believing that no such vice stained the character of this remarkable boy; certainly not until he was over ten years old. Every Thursday evening his mother took him aside, and talked to him most lovingly about serious things. By such means as these did his parents lay the foundation-stones upon which he afterward built up his fair and stately character.

That he might not become a sickly, but a strong, healthy boy, he was never allowed more than three meals a day. Between these meals he was not permitted to eat or drink. At eight o'clock he was taken regularly to bed, and left to go to sleep in the dark, without an attendant remaining in the room, by which practice, so early begun, he never learned to be afraid of being alone in the dark.

The children in the Wesley family were taught such beautiful habits with respect to their intercourse with one another, that we suppose the old parsonage walls rarely, if ever, echoed angry voices, or cruel, biting words. They were all required to address each other as brother or sister. Hence.

if our little John wanted his brother's ball, instead of rudely saying, "Sam, lend us your ball!" he quietly said, "Please, Brother Samuel, lend me your ball." Or, if he wanted his eldest sister to mend a rip in his jacket, instead of vulgarly saying, "Em, just sew this rip for a fellow," he politely said, "Please, Sister Emilia, will you mend my jacket?" This polite way of speaking helped to make the intercourse of these children very delightful. It also made them grow up to be real ladies and gentlemen, courteous to all, servile to none.

Another of their habits was to respect each other's little articles of property. If, for instance, "little Jacky" had a toy or a picture-book, neither Samuel nor any of his sisters would think of taking it without his permission, much less against his protest. But if he exchanged or sold it to any of the others, he was compelled to abide by his bargain. By this simple device, the Wesley children were early taught to deal justly. If, however, Jacky had promised to lend his book or toy to Samuel or Mary, or either of the others, he was

obliged to keep his promise. By seeing this rule steadily enforced, all the Wesley children learned that promises, instead of being "like pie-crust, made to be broken," as a bad proverb says, are sacred things, and should be honorably fulfilled in all cases.

"Little Jacky" also shared the benefit of still another happy practice. Every morning and evening he was taken into a room by Samuel, Emilia, or Susannah, who there read to him the Psalms for the day, and a chapter from the Bible. After this, each one offered his secret morning and evening prayers to God. By this means these children were made instructors of themselves and each other in the letter of that Holy Scripture which made them wise unto salvation.

Perhaps you think this sort of training made the lives of little John and the other children at the parsonage very dull, and even gloomy. If so, you hold an opinion which is without foundation in fact. There is abundant evidence that all these children loved their parents and their early home with a strong, life-long affection. In all

their subsequent changes of place and fortune, their hearts dwelt warmly and lovingly on the dear old parsonage, in which they spent their early days. Had their life been sad, irksome, and gloomy there, could they have thought of it thus? Nay, nay; they would, in that case, have tried to cover it with the mantle of forgetfulness. They would not have treasured it, as they did, among their most sacred recollections. Mingled with all the grave earnestness with which the work of life went on in that parsonage, there must have been a sweet cheerfulness in the devoted mother, and a frequent outburst of playfulness from the learned and stately father, which made it agreeable, and even spicy at times. Both parents believed in the propriety of suitable recreations; and often the nursery, the lawn, the garden, the croft, rang with the merry voices of their children playing in "high glee and frolic."

There are some anecdotes of the good rector which prove that he, too, could unbend and be merry on proper occasions. His humor was shown, one day, at the table of a miserly man,

who, in a fit of liberality, invited a few friends to dinner. The Epworth rector was one of the guests. When the repast was over, he was so amused at this unwonted feast in a miser's house, that he repeated, impromptu, the following not very complimentary lines :

"Thanks for this feast ! for 't is no less
Than eating manna in the wilderness.
Here some have starved, where we have found relief,
And seen the wonders of a chine of beef ;
Here chimneys smoke which never smoked before,
And we have dined where we shall dine no more."

"No, gentlemen," responded the niggardly host, "it is too expensive."

There is another anecdote, which states that the rector had a conceited clerk, who believed his parson to be the greatest man in Epworth, and himself next in worth and dignity. This clerk always received and wore the rector's cast-off wigs, which, being much too large for him, made his appearance ridiculous enough. One Sunday the parson resolved to mortify him in presence of the congregation, and therefore, before the service, he said :

"John, I shall preach on a particular subject to-day, and shall choose my own psalm, of which I shall give out the first line, and you shall proceed as usual."

The time for singing came. The rector gave out this line:

"And as an owl in desert is."

This was sung, and then John, peeping out from his big wig, drawled out:

"Lo! I am such an one."

The congregation, seeing the fitness of the line to the clerk's funny appearance, burst into a fit of laughter very unbecoming to the place and the hour, and very mortifying to the bewigged clerk.

After reading these anecdotes, you can readily imagine that this humorous rector often shed the sunshine of merriment upon his children, and thereby helped make his family circle the "fairy-ring of bliss" we have reason to think it was.



Chapter II.

IN THE HOME SCHOOL AT EPWORTH.

THE day after John's fifth birthday was a high day at the parsonage. Up to this time he had not learned his alphabet, although, as you have seen, he had learned many most precious life-lessons from his mother's lips. But to-day he was to begin his book studies. For the first time, he is to become a member of the family school. No doubt he feels not a little self-important. He knows he is going to take a step upward, and can scarcely help feeling a little innocent self-gratulation.

Breakfast is over. To every child and servant a task for the day is appointed, and the following order given by Mrs. Wesley:

“Let no one come into the school-room to-day from nine till twelve, or from two till five.”

Each one goes to his appointed work. Johnny takes his mother's hand, and is led into the school-room. The door is closed. The alphabet-card is placed in the child's hands. In six hours, he is told, he must learn all these letters. There must be no failure. And there was none. By five o'clock, Master John, aided by his good mother, was thoroughly master of the alphabet; and he went out to tea rejoicing, with the key to all knowledge in his hands.

All the Wesley children accomplished the same feat except two, and they did it in a day and a half.

The next day, Master John appeared in the school-room with the other children. There he stepped at once from the alphabet-card to the Bible. No tedious, senseless primer-lessons annoyed his young brain. His second lesson was those grand words: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” This his mother taught him to spell word by word; then, to read

it over and over, until he could read it off-hand without hesitation.

One verse thoroughly learned, another was begun, until, in a surprisingly short time, the boy could read the whole chapter. Of course, this required patient painstaking on his mother's part. She gave it ungrudgingly, never ceasing to help John, and all her children, on a lesson, until it was most thoroughly learned. Her persistence often astonished her less patient husband. One day he said to her:

"I wonder at your patience. You have told that child twenty times the same thing."

"Had I told it only nineteen times," replied Mrs. Wesley, "I should have lost my labor. You see it was the twentieth time that crowned my labor."

Noble, plodding mother! How rich was her reward when, in after years, she saw her most honored son working wonders in the kingdom of God with the same persistent, unwearied spirit!

It will interest you to know how this wise lady came to postpone teaching her children to read

until they were five years old. Her eldest child, Samuel, though keen, active, and seemingly bright, could not speak a word until he was nearly five years of age. She feared he was dumb. But one day, while playing with his pet cat, he crept under a large table where he could not be seen. For more than an hour no one was able to find him. At length his mother, in great alarm, called out:

“Samuel! Samuel!”

To her utter astonishment, a voice, from beneath the table, answered:

“Here I am, mother!”

Thus suddenly did speech come to this backward child. Shortly after, she began to teach him letters. So rapidly did he learn, and so surprising was his memory, that, in a very short time, he was able to read the Bible, or any other English book.

This rapid progress from a late beginning, suggested the postponement of the work of teaching her other children letters until they were five years old. She followed this practice with eminent success, with all her children except the youngest

With her, she began a little earlier, "and she was more years learning than any of the rest had been months."

Let us now take our last look at the *old* rectory. It is a Winter night—February 9, 1709 John Wesley, his brother Charles, not yet two months old, three sisters, and their nurse, are all quietly sleeping in one room. The rest of the household are also wrapped in sound sleep. Suddenly, just before the midnight hour, a loud voice is heard on the street, shouting, "Fire! fire! fire!" The rector, startled by this alarming cry, leaps from his bed, opens his chamber-door, and sees, to his great astonishment, that the fire is in his own house. The upper hall is filled with smoke; the thatched roof is in a blaze. Affrighted, but self-possessed, he runs, with only one stocking on, and carrying his breeches in his hand, to the chamber in which Mrs. Wesley, because of illness, was sleeping, with her two eldest daughters, and cries:

"Rise, quick! Shift for yourselves!"

Then, groping his way through the blinding

smoke to the nursery, he rouses the nurse, and bids her bring out the children. The girl snatches baby Charles from his bed, and, telling the others to come with her, follows Mr. Wesley through the hall and down the stairs.

They find the lower hall surrounded with flames. On reaching the front door, the excited parson is horror-struck on finding that it is locked. The key is up-stairs. It is a critical moment. Every life in the household depends on the rector's self-possession. Hesitation, confusion of purpose, will be death. But he, though trembling in every nerve, is equal to the occasion. Rushing up the staircase to the chamber, he grasps the key, and regains the hall before the stairway takes fire.

No sooner is the street-door opened than a strong wind blows the flames into the hall. Escape is becoming difficult. Some—probably the rector, and the nurse with baby Charles—rush out at the door. Some of the children make a dash at the rear windows, and at a little door leading into the garden, and are soon safe outside. Mrs. Wesley, who, as we have said, is quite ill, is

still in great peril, at the rear of the front hall. Her only clothing is a dressing-gown with a loose coat, which she holds over her breast, and her shoes. Three times she vainly tries to force her way through that sea of flame. She can not climb to the windows, nor reach the little garden-door. Her death seems inevitable. When, behold, she prays! Her courage is renewed. Calmly trusting in God, she now wades through the raging fire into the street. She is speechless. Her legs are scorched and her lips blackened, but her heart is grateful for her preservation.

Meanwhile the good rector seems to have lost his self-possession, and is wandering about the street, asking every one he meets, "Have you seen my wife and children?"

To one man of some note in the village, whom he meets, and whose hand he grasps warmly, he says: "God's will be done!"

The cruel man surlily replies: "Will you never have done with your tricks? You fired your house once before. Did you not get money enough by it then, that you have fired it again?"

To this malicious, insulting insinuation the perplexed rector only answers:

“God forgive you!”

A few minutes later, he finds his wife and children all safe, except “little Jacky,” who has not yet been seen by any one. At that very moment a child’s voice is heard issuing from the nursery. It is “Jacky,” crying for help. He has been sleeping on, unconscious of danger, until, waking suddenly, he sees his chamber filled with light. Thinking it is time to rise, he calls his nurse. No one answers. Pushing aside his bed-curtains, he peeps out, sees “streaks of fire,” jumps out of bed, runs to the door, where nothing meets his eye but a “roaring sea of flame.” He turns, runs to the window, and utters the cry which just now fell on his father’s ear.

Meantime, the worthy rector, stimulated by paternal love, almost beside himself with anguish, has returned to the front door. Rushing through the suffocating flames, he tries to ascend the stairs. They are half burned, and bend beneath his tread. Baffled, he retraces his steps through those fearful

waves of fire, and, kneeling in the doorway, in utter despair of saving his precious boy, commends his soul to God.

But that noble boy can not perish. God has a great work for him to do. While the father is on his knees, the boy mounts a trunk, and shows his little face at a window.

"Fetch a ladder?" cries a man in the crowd.

"There is no time for that," replies another man. "Come here! I will stand against the house. You mount my shoulders, quick!"

It is no sooner said than done. The child is pulled through the casement. The next instant the burning roof falls, inward fortunately, and the child, with his deliverers, is saved!

Master John is now taken to his half-distracted father, who can not believe the little fellow is really in his arms, until he has kissed him two or three times. Then he cries out:

"Come, neighbors, let us kneel down; let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go. I am rich enough!"

Yes: that good man, praising God in the midst of a catastrophe which made him a beggar in earthly things, was rich indeed—rich in the love of his wife and little ones; rich in faith, in hope, in heavenly love; richer in peace, too, on that dreadful night, than the wealthiest sinner in his parish. And his riches are of that sort which fire can not burn.

This trial by fire made the Rector of Epworth poor indeed. He had previously suffered much loss from the same destructive element. Shortly before the birth of "little Jacky," the parsonage had been partly burned. His year's crop of flax had also once perished in flames. And now, every thing—house, books, manuscripts, furniture, clothing—was gone. He had very few friends in his parish willing to help him. He was too faithful a preacher, too far above his people in culture and bearing, too decidedly a Churchman, to command much sympathy among such ignorant, boorish people as formed the great body of his parishioners. There is, indeed, little reason for doubting that some of them had set fire to the

parsonage, as they had previously done to his crop of flax. But this dastardly act seems to have reacted in his favor. The best of his people, ashamed to see their excellent pastor so shamefully abused, began to look on his many virtues, and to regard him with growing favor and affection. The parsonage was rebuilt of brick, large, commodious, and comfortable—a good family mansion. It is still standing, and occupied by the present lordly Rector of Epworth. But so impoverished was Mr. Wesley by this fire, that eighteen years afterward the new parsonage was not half furnished, and Mrs. Wesley and her children, as she herself declared, were not more than half clothed. Hence, you see, Master John must have suffered many little deprivations in consequence of this unfortunate fire.

Nor was this the only evil it brought upon him and the other children. During the year which it took to rebuild their home, they were scattered among neighbors, friends, and relatives. Thus their beautiful home habits were broken in upon, their studies neglected, their religious culture and

training suspended. They were exposed, also, to evil influences. They were improperly indulged. Bad examples led them to become rude in speech and rough in manner. How much Master John's character suffered from these causes is not known. Doubtless he was injured; but probably not so severely as the others; for, though only about six years old, he was sober and firm beyond his years.

About a year after the fire, the Wesley children gladly came together again in the new parsonage. The old, happy, busy life began again. Six hours of the day were spent in the school-room. Mrs. Wesley was their chief teacher. Her husband assisted her at times. She was a fine scholar, a superior teacher, and she taught all her children until they were old enough to be sent away to school.

She now took particular pains with John. His wonderful escape had impressed her with the idea that God intended him to act some great and unusual part in the history of the world. She therefore took particular pains with his early education. In one of her written prayers in his behalf, she said:

"O Lord, I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child that thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been, that I may do my best to instill into his mind the principles of thy true religion and virtue."

That God heard and answered this loving, earnest mother's prayers, there can be no reasonable doubt. The beautiful character, the grand life of her noble son, is ample evidence that she had grace given her by which to mold and fashion his plastic young soul.

While it is certain that little John was cheerful, and even gay, in his disposition, it is equally certain that he was more sober and studious than most children. It rarely happens, as you know too well, that a boy between seven and ten years old, pauses, when about to do any common act, to ask himself if the thing he wants to do is proper and right. It is enough for him to know that other boys do it, that it has not been forbidden to him. But our thoughtful little John always reflected before acting, asking himself, "Why should I do this or that?" and, "Is it right?" If, for example, any

one offered him an orange or an apple between meals, instead of taking and eating it without thought, he looked gravely into the giver's face, and replied :

"I thank you. I will think of it."

This habit was so strong in him, and was applied to so many things, that one day his father said to him, half reprovingly :

"Child, you think to carry every thing by dint of argument ; but you will find how little is done in the world by close reasoning."

At another time, after witnessing one of his unchildish attempts to reason about some simple act, his father, somewhat pettishly, remarked to Mrs. Wesley :

"I profess, sweetheart, I think our Jack would not attend to the most pressing necessities of nature " (such as eating and drinking), "unless he could give a reason for it."

But while "our Jack" often surprised his good father with his peculiarities, he also won his confidence and admiration. So satisfied was the stately parson with his son's conduct, that he

allowed him to partake of the Lord's-supper when he was only eight years old ! How the good rector's heart must have swelled with holy joy, when he saw his devout little son kneeling beside the spare form of his happy wife at the communion-table ! And what pure gladness must have filled the child's heart when his lips touched the symbols which brought so forcibly to his mind the love of Jesus, once the Christ-child, who shed his blood for children as well as for adults ! That he really loved his Lord at that time, is not doubtful. Many years afterward, he said that he was ten years old before he sinned away the comfort and washing of the Holy Spirit, of which his infant baptism was the appointed symbol. Alas ! how few children can say as much as this !

John also gave early marks of that power of patient endurance for which he was so distinguished in after years. When over eight years old, he had that wretched disease, the small-pox. His father was from home at the time, and his mother wrote him, saying :

"Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a

man—and, indeed, like a Christian—without any complaint; though he seemed angry at the small-pox when they were sore, as we guessed by his looking sourly at them; for he never said any thing."

These are all the known facts about Wesley's childhood. They show him to have been brave, patient, enduring, polite, studious, obedient, thoughtful, clear-headed, firm, loving, and pious, up to his tenth year, when he was sent from home to a public school in London.





Chapter III.

WESLEY AS A PUBLIC SCHOOL BOY.

THE hero of our story has now reached the middle of the eleventh year of his life. His father, through the friendly influence of the Duke of Buckingham, has secured him a scholarship in the Charter-house School, near Smithfield, in the city of London. He must therefore go out from that quiet, orderly, love-lighted home at the parsonage, away from the guardianship of his learned father, and the loving watchfulness of his noble mother, into the rough, turbulent life of a public school. It was like passing suddenly from the balmy air of June into the cold, freezing atmosphere of November.

You can readily imagine the boyish hopes, the sad farewells, the mother's tearful, longing looks,

the brotherly and sisterly adieus and kisses, of the parting hour. You can fancy you see him in some lumbering vehicle of the olden times, seated beside his father, looking curiously on the scenery, asking innumerable questions, as he rode over the rough, muddy roads of that period. You can conceive his feelings when the carriage reached the busy city, and his eyes rested on the lofty dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. How elated he must have been, as he rode through those busy streets! How anxiety, not unmixed with dread, must have damped his spirits, when, drawing near Smithfield, he began to shrink from his first meeting with the stern, dignified masters, and the strange, bold boys of the Charter-house School! It was a great change for so young a boy; but, no doubt, "Jacky" met it bravely, and entered hopefully on his new life.

This Charter-house School was an old institution, founded by a merchant named Thomas Sutton, in 1611. He left a sum of money sufficient to board, clothe, and educate forty boys, perpetually, in an ancient building erected and long occupied by a set of lazy Carthusian monks. Its

original name was Chartreux, from the town in which that order of monks originated. The mangled body of its last prior had been hung over the big wooden gates through which young Wesley passed to his new home—an unpleasant recollection, surely, if the boy had been taught its history.

Within, this Charter-house had much to attract and please the new student. There were spacious play-grounds for football and hockey, long courts in front of the old cloisters or cells of the ancient monks, fine shaded walks, lawns, and fountains. There was a grand hall for festal occasions, a large school-room with ornamented ceiling, and a big kitchen, formerly the banqueting-hall of the jolly old monks, who, in their latter days, were greater lovers of good roast-beef and seasoned venison than of earnest prayers and deeds of Christian charity.

We can picture our plucky, studious little "Jacky" standing, with his thirty-nine companions, on the foundation, or free-list, of the school—"gown-scholars," they were called—and the numerous other boys whose tuition was paid by their

friends. And this is nearly all we can do; for very little is known about the details of his life within its walls. That he looked on the senior boys with a sort of small boy's reverence, because measured by his own size, they looked so big in his eyes, we learn from his Journal. We are sure, also, that he was a quick, diligent, persevering student, as fond of inquiring into the reason of things as he had been while in the dear old home at Epworth. The proof of his diligence is in the fact that, at the early age of sixteen and a half, he was prepared to enter college at Oxford. Let those humdrum lads and misses who groan under the burden of mere academic studies at that age, make a note of this fact, and be shamed into praiseworthy emulation of our great founder's school-boy industry!

But John's road through the Charter-house to Oxford was neither smooth nor flowery, but rough and thorny. It was the custom, in those rude days, for the big boys to act the part of tyrants over the little ones, in the great public schools of England. They forced them to perform menial

services, as "fags." They thrashed and otherwise abused them. They even robbed them of their food. So severe was the ordeal through which a small boy had to pass, that sensitive, timid boys were sometimes seriously injured. Cowper, one of England's greatest poets, is a sad example. His delicately strung nature was so wearied and strained by his treatment at Westminster school, that his nervous system broke down, and he was unfitted for contact with the rough realities of active life; and he consequently spent most of his days, sad and melancholy, in retirement, with sympathizing friends. Happily for himself and the world, young Wesley was made of sterner stuff. Though known as a poverty-stricken boy, and abused accordingly by the sons of men who were richer, but not half so manly as his father; though robbed by the big boys of his portion of meat so steadily that, through most of his career at the Charter-house, he lived chiefly on bread and soups; yet he bore up bravely against his trials, retained his spirits and his health, and left the school, at last, a strong, high-spirited, and hopeful

lad. He never learned to succumb to trials or difficulties.

Perhaps one cause of his ability to endure these trials was his steadfast obedience to one of his good father's commands. Before leaving him at school, Mr. Wesley had said :

"Jacky, I want you to promise me that you will run around the green at the Charter-house three times every morning."

Probably this request appeared singular and arbitrary to the boy ; but he had the good sense to give the required promise, and the honor to stick to it to the very close of his school-life. The effect of that brisk daily run in the fresh morning air, on his spirits and his bodily vigor, was to enable him to breast the tide of his troubles boldly and successfully ; it also laid the foundation of that remarkable cheerfulness and health which fitted him, in after life, to perform his astonishing labors. Had he despised his father's wish, and lost his health, the world would probably have never heard of him as the founder of a mighty Church. Let headstrong boys mark well this

fact in our hero's life, and learn that there is often a hidden wisdom in a father's command, which can only be fully comprehended by obeying it.

Another help to Master John was the friendship of the head-master, Dr. Thomas Walker, in whose good graces he stood very high. Nor was this favor capricious, or obtained by cringing. It was fairly earned by his superiority as a scholar. It must have consoled him richly in his troubles. What were the insults and tyranny of thoughtless big boys, compared with the head-master's praises !

On the 12th of every December, the scholars of the Charter-house kept high festival. It was the anniversary of their foundation. Games in courts and cloisters, feasting in the old monkish banqueting-hall, addresses and songs in the grand hall, made the day a merry one for the boys. Among their songs was an old Carthusian melody, with the following chorus :

"Then blessed be the memory
Of good old *Thomas Sutton* ;
Who gave us lodgings, learning, and
He gave us beef and mutton !"

Poor poetry, you say. Yes: but we print it because we love to picture the earnest, honest face of little Jacky, among the other "gown scholars," singing it with open mouth, his eyes, may be, fixed on the splendid portrait of their founder which graced the hall, and his heart wondering whether the good old man ever thought that the big boys would rob the little ones of their portion of the beef and mutton so liberally provided for with his money, and so gleefully celebrated in their festival songs.

When young Wesley reached the upper "forms," or classes, it is gratifying to know that he was not guilty of the customary meanness of tyrannizing over the little boys. To his credit it can be said, that he chose them for companions, became their instructor, and, in some sort, their leader. They delighted to gather around him in some of the courts, and listen eagerly to his orations. To them, instead of a tyrant, he was a star of the first magnitude, and they rejoiced in his beams.

His teacher wondered at conduct so unusual; and one day the usher, Andrew Tooke, broke in

upon him in the midst of his oration, and said, in a tone of authority:

“Wesley, follow me!”

With great reluctance, the blushing lad obeyed, and went after the intruding usher, into a private room.

“Wesley,” said the usher, after closing the door, “how is it that you are so often found among the boys of the lower forms, and not in the company of the bigger boys, your equals?”

To the astonishment of the teacher, the boy looked up, and calmly answered with the Miltonic quotation:

“Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.”

What could the usher do with such a boy but permit him to continue his rule, which was evidently beneficial to his willing subjects? But what did the lad mean by his reply? Did he intend to say he was so ambitious that he preferred being a ruler in wickedness to a servant of the good? By no means. As we interpret him, he meant that since he had little hope of being useful to the

rough, mischief-loving tyrants of the upper forms, he choose to make companions of the little boys, to whom he could communicate some useful knowledge. The usher probably so understood him; for it does not appear that he forbade the continuance of his reign. Perhaps he saw in the strange reply the germ of that divine ambition which led the lad, years afterward, to turn from the proud dignitaries and gentry of the Church, who rejected his message, to the poor colliers and other low-class people, who heard him gladly. But whether he saw it or not, we can.

About five years of the boy's life was spent in the Charter-house school. When sixteen years and a half old, he quitted it with scholarly honor, and was entered as a student at Christ Church, Oxford. He seems to have loved his school-life, on the whole. He always spoke kindly, feelingly even, of the place; and once every year, when in London, he visited it, and took his old walk round the Green. It is to be feared, however, that he was not so good a lad when he left as when he entered its cloisters. Evil influences had sapped

the life of his early piety. Unsupported by the wise counsels of his father and the sweet influence of his mother, he had permitted the bad examples of his schoolmates to lead him into practices displeasing to God. Read his own sad but honest confession on this point :

“Outward restraints being removed,” he says, “I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was,—1. Not being so bad as other people ; 2. Having still a kindness for religion ; and, 3. Reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.”

That you may not suppose young Wesley worse than he really was, I must inform you that, like the great apostle Paul, he was always very severe when he sat in judgment on himself. I have no idea that the lad was, in any sense, openly immoral while at school. That he lost the favor of

God which he enjoyed at Epworth, is doubtless true. As one of his biographers* says, "John Wesley entered the Charter-house a saint, and left it a sinner." Alas, that a life so fairly begun should have had this stain upon it, even for a short time! But it had; and the painful fact should teach every pious youth, whose duties call him away from the sweet restraints of home into the battle-field of active life, "diligently to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation."

* Tyerman.





Chapter IV.

WESLEY'S STUDENT LIFE AT OXFORD.

YOUNG WESLEY is now seventeen years old, and is elected to one of the Charterhouse scholarships in Christ Church, Oxford. Not without some regrets, we imagine, but with more hope than sorrow, he mounts the stage-coach in London, and journeys, fifty-three miles, to venerable Oxford. Doubtless his young heart beats with quickened throbs, when from the coach-top, on reaching an eminence near that city of colleges, he obtains his first view of its stately domes and moss-covered towers. Beautiful for situation, lying between the Isis and the Cherwell, with gardens stretching down to the water-side—with its nineteen college edifices and its numerous churches, half hid among grand old

trees—it charms his eye and delights his imagination. As an intelligent lad, he calls up many of its romantic historical associations. This city, he thinks, was once the abode of our Saxon kings. Here the fierce Danes struggled for conquest. William the Norman visited this place with sword and fire, because of its Saxon loyalty. Yonder, coming from Woodstock Park, Henry I often rode in brilliant array, with pennons, knights, esquires, and men-at-arms. Fair Rosamond lies moldering in the dust of yonder meadow. Across that river, Queen Maud, her troops beaten in battle, escaped one Winter's night, dressed in white, like the ice and snow which, happily for her, covered its frigid waters.

Passing from thoughts of these royal personages, it is not unlikely that young Wesley called up that doughty champion of the truth, Wyclif, the bright “morning-star of the Reformation,” whose fearless tongue once waked startling echoes from the walls of those old Oxford churches, and begot living hopes in the breasts of many of its ancient citizens. There, amid the fire and smoke

of the martyr's stake, he probably pictured the serene faces of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, whose heroic souls ascended to their heavenly coronation from its squares. Such thoughts as these, mingled, it may be, with anxieties respecting himself, must have stirred deep emotions in his breast, as, dismounting from the stage, he finally passed beneath the stately gateway of Christ Church, over pavements which had been trodden by students like himself for more than two hundred years.

It would, no doubt, interest you greatly, could we lift the veil, and let you see young Wesley as he appeared when with his tutor, Dr. Wigan, and when in his room at study, and at the college examinations. But there are no means of doing this. The details of his student-life at Christ Church seem never to have been recorded. This much, however, is certain; he was a superior scholar, and made rapid progress, especially in his classical studies. He appears to have loved knowledge for its own sake, and to have studied, up to his twenty-second year, with no higher

object than simply *to know*. Hence, when twenty one, he was described as “a very sensible and acute collegian—a young fellow of the first classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments.’ Very complimentary words, these ; and, no doubt, well merited.

Oxford students in those days were not remarkable for either morality or piety. On the contrary, a student of decided piety was a rare character in those ancient halls of learning. Boating, racing, gambling, frolicking, and roystering were far more congenial pursuits to most, than either praying or studying. It need not surprise us, therefore, if we find young Wesley entering into the spirit and engaging in some, at least, of the sports of his associates. His career at the Charter-house would incline us to expect this. Having lost the peace of God, and thrown off his fear, in some degree, while at school, how could he escape the still mightier evil influence of the College?

That he did not, is proved beyond dispute by his own words. Speaking of this portion of his life, he says :

“I had not, all this while, so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, I went on habitually—and, for the most part, very contentedly—in some or other known sin; though with some intermission and short struggles.”

One feels sad to read this confession from the young man whose early boyhood had been spent among the loving sanctities of Epworth Rectory. Surely, the sweet influences of that delightful home ought to have clothed the student as with impenetrable armor, and made him proof against the temptations both of school and college! That they did not is a solemn fact, which should teach you the weakness of young souls when exposed to the cunning temptations of that arch-tempter whose delight it is to entice their unwary feet from those hallowed paths into which they were so early led by the soft hands of maternal love.

But do not let this confession of the great Wesley concerning his college days mislead you. Such was his deep humility in the after-time of his life, that he was apt to paint his own errors in very black letters, as we have intimated in a

previous chapter. You must not, therefore, picture him as a reckless young man, rushing into the ways of bacchanalians and sirens. That he was gay, sprightly, fond of lively society, there is little room to doubt. He was a great humorist, a polished wit, a rare conversationalist, and would be likely to frequent those merry students' circles in which such talent was enjoyed and applauded. That he indulged in needless expenses is proved by his father's frequent letters sharply upbraiding him for getting into debt; though your view of even this fault must be modified by the fact that his main dependence for support was on the two hundred dollars per annum which he received from his Charter-house scholarship. Consider that, whatever else he did, he still said his "prayers, both public and private;" that he "read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament;" that he took the sacrament three times a year; and that he never neglected his studies,—and you must be satisfied that, though not pious, though to a limited degree gay, perhaps convivial, his garments

were never soiled with the spots of outbreking immoralities.

Nay, such religious practices as his are always flung off by abandoned young men. But the pure spirit of his Epworth home followed young Wesley in his spiritual and moral wanderings, such as they were, and kept him from leaping into those abysses of wickedness in which so many of his fellow-students delighted to wallow.

The porter of Christ Church, who appears to have been a pious though very odd man, came late one evening to our student's room, and said he would like to talk with him. After a little pleasant banter, Wesley said.

"Go home and get another coat!"

"This is the only coat I have in the world, and I thank God for it," replied the poor porter.

"Go home and get your supper, then?"

"I have had nothing to-day but a drink of water, and I thank God for that," rejoined the man.

"It is late, and you will be locked out, and then what will you have to thank God for?"

"I will thank him that I have the bare stones to lie upon."

"John" said young Wesley, "you thank God when you have nothing to wear, nothing to eat, and no bed to lie on; what else do you thank him for?"

"I thank him," responded the good man, "that he has given me life and being, a heart to love him, and a desire to serve him."

The simple speech and evident sincerity of this grateful servant of the Lord Jesus, as Mr. Wesley afterward stated, made a deep impression upon him. When he left, there remained of his words a conviction, in the gay young student's mind, that there was something in religion to which he was yet a stranger. The exact value of that poor porter's contribution to the development of young Wesley's religious character can never be known until God himself declare it.

Mr. Wesley is now nearly twenty-two years of age. He has been more than four years at college, and is beginning to inquire what he shall do—what profession he shall enter. What his pre-

vious ideas on this point had been, is not known ; but now his thoughts very naturally turn toward the ministry. I say, naturally ; because his blood was clerical on the side of both parents. That he was not yet truly a Christian was not generally thought to be a serious unfitness for the sacred office of the ministry in those evil times. In those days, many men sought the pulpit as they did the bar ; that is, to earn their bread. But now that the high-minded young Wesley begins to think of the ministry, he rises at a bound above the ideas of his times, and earnestly seeks to fit himself for the sacred vocation, by careful and extensive reading of books on religion. He also writes to his learned father and wise mother for counsel and advice. He has attained his majority, and is a learned man ; but he does not regard himself wise enough to choose his calling without first obtaining the light which shines from parental wisdom.

Among the books he reads, is the "Christian's Pattern," by Thomas á Kempis, and "Holy Living and Dying," by Jeremy Taylor. The first

leads him to see that religion is more than an outward form ; that it implies the surrender of the heart, the whole heart, to God. The second convinces him that "every part" of his "life (not some only) must be a sacrifice either to God or to self ; that is, in effect, to the devil."

About the same time, God kindly orders his steps, so that he meets with a "religious friend," which, he ingenuously says, "I never had until now." No wonder the Charter-house scholar and Oxford student went astray ! During all those critical eleven years, no loving disciple of his mother's Lord had appeared to whisper the words of Christian friendship in his youthful ears. Alas ! what evil times and places were those in which the great spiritual reformer spent his boyhood and youth, after quitting the genial shelter of the rectory at Epworth !

But now the happy change has begun in good earnest. The scales have fallen, in part at least, from the young man's eyes. There is much mist about him yet. But his earnest nature is roused, and he says, "I began to alter the whole form of

my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life."

With this brave purpose in his heart, he begins to reform his life. He prays much; he watches his thoughts, his words, his actions. He spends an hour or two daily in religious thought. He goes to the communion every week. He denies himself; eating the simplest food, and drinking water only. He aims at being a holy man in heart and life. His whole nature is stirred within him. His back, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, is toward the City of Destruction; his face is set sternly, immovably, toward the Celestial City.

It is a grand struggle on which our young student has entered. The stake is not a college honor, a Church living, the bubble reputation, the bauble wealth, the phantom fame; nay—but his *soul*, his happiness, present and future, in time and in eternity. The noblest stake which any man can strive to win.

The struggle in our student's case will be long and toilsome. As we have said, there is a mist about him—the exhalation of the formal Chris-

tianity of his age—and he does not yet see the simple truth that Jesus saves, Jesus only. He says, "That now doing so much and living so good a life, I doubted not that I was a good Christian."

Until that trust in his own doings is sloughed off from his faith, and he trusts in *Jesus only*, our student will struggle on in pain and disappointment. We will now follow him through his almost marvelous battle with this misconception of true faith, up to his victory at the cross.





Chapter V.

WESLEY AS FELLOW OF LINCOLN.

OUR student is now twenty-two years of age. The current of his being, his thoughts, his desires, his affections, are flowing toward God with the steadfast movement of a great river. Acting in harmony with his high purpose to keep the commands of his Maker, he seeks ordination as a deacon in the Church of England. He is set apart for the work of the holy ministry by the hands of the great and good Bishop Potter, who also ordained him priest or elder three years later.

The year following his ordination as deacon, a very uncommon honor for a young man of twenty-three is conferred upon Wesley. He is elected a "Fellow" of Lincoln College, Oxford, over many

competitors, and in spite of bitter opposition from many who regard him as being "righteous overmuch." This victory is the fruit of his high reputation as a scholar, gained by unceasing devotion to study.

What is a "*Fellow?*" you inquire. The term is peculiar to English colleges, and needs explanation. Fellows are the *governors* of a college; they manage its affairs, elect its head, act as moderators at disputations, serve as tutors to individual students, and as lecturers to classes. They are supported from the funds of the college, receive fees from students for their services as tutors, and are eligible to such livings or churches as are in the gift of their college. The office is both honorable and comfortable. It may be held during life, provided the incumbent does not marry.

John's father is delighted with his son's election to this Fellowship, and exclaims jubilantly in a letter otherwise sad:

"Wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln!"

The rector of Epworth was now a feeble man

Close study, hard parish work, financial perplexities, and a malarious climate had robbed the good old gentleman of much vigor. Palsy had benumbed his limbs. He had also the care of an additional parish, Wroote, on his hands, and could not obtain such a curate as he desired. In his sore need he turned to his son John, and besought him to come to his aid. Like a good son, our young deacon gratifies his father's wish, obtains leave to be absent from college, and goes down to Epworth.

For nearly two years he preaches at Epworth and Wroote, spending much of his time in study, and striving to keep the whole law of God. He preaches the truth with great fidelity, but confesses with characteristic frankness, "I saw no fruit of my labor." No wonder. He has not yet learned to look for salvation by faith only. He is not, therefore, baptized with fire, and his hour of success in winning souls has not yet come.

But this quiet and fruitless life in the swamps at Wroote, and among the boorish villagers of Epworth, is not to continue. God has a grander

sphere in preparation for our scholarly young preacher. He must needs, therefore, return for a while to Oxford, to undergo the stern ordeal of persecution. A peremptory letter from the rector of his college recalls him to those academic shades, where we now find him acting as tutor to eleven students (a number subsequently increased), lecturing on Greek, and presiding as moderator over the class disputations.

Before describing our young hero's life during the next six years of his stay at Oxford, we will present you with a sketch of his personal appearance, as given by his contemporaries when he was about twenty-six years old. Picture him, then, in your imagination, as a young man below the average size, with a symmetrical frame compactly built, and with finely-formed limbs. His face, though not womanly, is refined to the verge of womanliness; its delicate features being finely cut, and irradiated with the soft light of a cheerful disposition. His eyes are dark, brilliant, penetrating. His mouth is beautifully formed, with lips indicative of firmness. He wears his hair long and

flowing, down to his shoulders. There is an air of authority, but not of assumption, about him; and his aspect is that of a man self-centered, not easily moved from his own purposes, but born to sway the wills of other men.

Such is John Wesley, as seen even by indifferent observers. The following description of the impression he made upon his friends, shortly after this period, is from the pen of Alexander Knox. He says: "His countenance, as well as his conversation, expressed an habitual gayety of heart, which nothing but conscious innocence and virtue could have bestowed. He was, in truth, the most perfect specimen of moral happiness I ever saw; and my acquaintance with him has done more to teach me what a heaven upon earth is implied in the maturity of Christian piety, than all I have elsewhere seen or heard or read, except in the Sacred Volume."

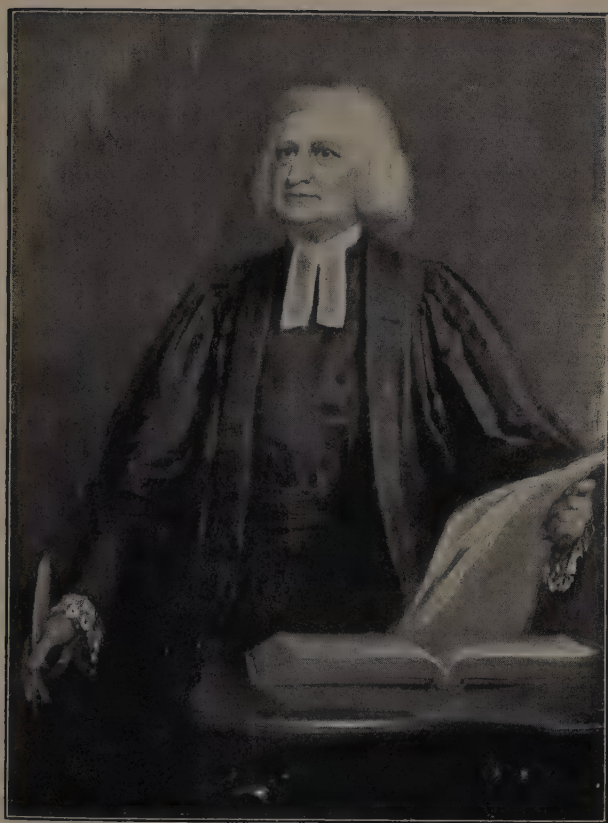
Such is John Wesley while pursuing his career as Fellow of Lincoln. Strange that such a man should become a target for poisoned arrows, discharged, not by the hands of madcap students

only, but also by college dignitaries, by men solemnly pledged to the work of Christian education !

About the time Wesley became "Fellow of Lincoln," his brother Charles, afterward the "sweet singer" of Methodism, who was five years younger than himself, became a student at Christ Church College. He had prepared for college at Westminster Grammar-school, where, as John had done at the Charter-house, he lost some of the sweet influences of his Epworth home. When he came to Oxford, John found him to be a "gay young fellow," with "more genius than grace," loving pleasure better than piety. John tried to revive the sparks of his early fireside devotion ; but he playfully rejoined :

"What, would you have me to be a saint all at once ?"

But, while John was preaching for his father at Wroote and Epworth, Charles became serious, and began to care for his soul. Among other things, he went to the sacrament every week, and induced two fellow-students, named Kirkham and Morgan, to join him.



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C. Wesley

When John returned to Oxford, he gladly joined this little band. Under his influence, they became more and more strict and devout. One day a student, struck by the regularity of their conduct, called them Methodists. The name, which had been applied to very religious people, perhaps a century before, was quaint, and it took. It stuck to them, and to all who became connected with them, until it became what it now is, the distinguishing name of one of the largest Protestant bodies of Christians on the globe.

Wesley's religious purposes now became intensified to the highest degree. To do the will of the Highest became the chief object of his life. He could have chosen something lower, as most around him had done. A life of learned ease, Church preferment, even a bishop's miter, the fame of superior scholarship, the friendship of the great in Church and State, were objects clearly within reach of his great powers. But he deliberately—may I not say nobly?—spurned them all, that he might win Christ.

Listen to his noble words. Said he: "I once

desired to make a fair show in language and philosophy. But it is past. There is a more excellent way; and if I can not attain to any progress in one without throwing up all thoughts of the other, why, fare it well!"

Listen again: "I am to renounce the world; to draw off my affections from this world, and fix them on a better."

Once more: "As for reputation, though it be a glorious instrument of advancing our Master's service, yet there is a better than that—a clean heart, a single eye, a soul full of God."

These words imply heroic self-devotion to a glorious object. Had he given himself to the discovery of a new continent, like Columbus; to the invention of some useful art, like Palissy and Goodyear; to the enlargement of natural science, like Linnæus and Faraday,—he would have acted a noble part, provided he had not neglected religion. But when he made the pursuit of religion his master passion, treading all mere earthly aims under foot, and throwing the whole force of his being into the pursuit of God's favor and the

doing of God's will, he did a sublime deed. He grappled with the grandest interest of the human soul, and soared into sympathy with the highest form of human life.

You may perceive the *wisdom* of this heavenly passion, by recalling those great words of Jesus which assure that he who "seeks *first* the kingdom of heaven" shall have the earthly things "added." Put the *earthly* first, and you shall lose the real good it contains, and heaven with it. Let God be chief, and you shall enjoy him, and with him all that is worth having of the earthly. This is the theory of Christ. Mr. Wesley found it true, and so may you.

Having resolved loftily, Wesley acted diligently. First, he studied with a devotion equaled by few, excelled by none, of the Oxford literati. Next, he spent much time daily in secret prayer and in reading Holy Scripture. He partook of the sacrament every week. He fasted severely; he denied himself every luxury in food and dress. He observed saints' days and holidays with ritualistic fidelity—things, by the way, which he might, with

greater wisdom, have omitted. He visited the sick, the poor, and the prisoners in Oxford jail. He instructed poor children, exhorted his students to become Christians, built up the religious society begun by his brother in the university, spent the greater part of his income in aiding the poor, and walked, on more than one occasion, sixty miles, hoping to get instruction for his soul from a pious man. In short, he filled every waking hour with strenuous efforts to keep the law of God in thought, in feeling, and in act. And this, not fitfully, but regularly, day by day, and year after year. Never did any man pursue his chosen end with more self-sacrificing devotion.

Wesley's singular devotion, and his success in interesting other university men, to the number of twenty-seven, was met by bitter opposition from students, tutors, fellows, proctors, and the dignitaries of the university generally. Vital piety was a rare thing in those days, and when it was so strikingly illustrated by Wesley and his associates, it quickened the evil passions of many into violent activity. They nicknamed them Methodists,

the Holy Club, the Godly Club, Bible Moths, crack-brained enthusiasts, fools, and superstitious madmen. Mr. Wesley they called "Curator and Father of the Holy Club." The censors of the college once met "to blow up the Godly Club." All manner of false reports were invented. They were threatened, ostracized, and treated with insult. Most of them bore these trials of their faith heroically, for a time at least. Wesley himself never flinched. Said he: "Ill men say all manner of evil of me, and good men believe them. There is a way, and there is but one, of making my peace. God forbid I should ever take it!"

Great words, these, of a true man! They came from the soul of a genuine hero—from a man who could have gone bravely to the stake for his Master's sake, but whose denial of his Lord could not have been bought with all the pomps and vanities of time, or wrung out of him by torturing rack or burning pincers. Yes: the martyr's spirit was in our honored Wesley.

The young gentlemen who associated with the Wesley brothers, also shared their persecutions.

On the day of the weekly sacrament at St. Mary's Church, to which the members of the "Holy Club" resorted with scrupulous fidelity, crowds of undergraduates, smiled on by college dignitaries, collected in courts and quadrangles, to heap insults upon them. It was no light cross to run the gauntlet between the lines of these ribald young gowmsmen, who jeered, hooted, hissed, hurled stinging sarcasms, and pointed scornful fingers at the meek little band of Oxford Methodists.

Nor was this their only trial. Opposition, in one case at least, took the form of personal violence. Said a college dignitary to his nephew:

"If you go to weekly communion, I will turn you out of doors."

The youth listened with meekness, while he silently prayed for grace to obey God rather than man. God helped him, and he went to the next communion. His learned uncle was then enraged, seized him by the throat, and shook him violently.

This wrong the youth also endured in the spirit of meekness, and continued to "break bread" at St. Mary's with his companions.

Then the uncle, seeing that threats and personal violence availed nothing, tried the power of soft words. Persuasive flattery succeeded where force had failed. The young man yielded, and the "Holy Club" lost one of its members.

Others, cajoled by flatteries, or wearied with the stern struggle necessary to resist the unceasing tide of ridicule, evil report, and enmity which flowed in upon them from every side, as from an exhaustless sea, also gave up the unequal strife—unequal because, with all their devotion, these young men had not gained that peace and power which comes from faith in Jesus *only*. Lacking this, when "the strokes of stalwart men fell fierce and fast," it need not surprise you to be told that few were found, like Wesley, to possess "the great heart that can not fear."

But there were a few grand young souls whose unflinching courage nothing could subdue. Among these were the gentlemanly Morgan, who was speedily called from the scene of strife to be crowned in heaven; the loving Charles Kinchin, who also was soon summoned to renew his sweet

fellowship with his beloved Morgan, in the Celestial City ; the devoted James Hervey, who lived to delight the world with his beautifully written, though somewhat sentimental, "Meditations ;" the active Ingham, whose persuasive voice, in after years, won many to the cross ; and the eloquent Whitefield, whose unequaled oratory became the wonder of the Christian world, and the means of winning multitudes from evil to good.

These good and true young men, with a few other equally brave spirits, continued to rally round John Wesley as their recognized chief. They, with his brother Charles, looked up to him for encouragement and guidance so long as he remained at Oxford.

When Wesley was thirty-one years old, his revered father, feeling the weakness of age creeping on, besought him to become his successor, if possible, in the rectory at Epworth. There was much to be said in favor of this plan. It would gratify his father, enable his beloved mother to retain her Epworth home after her husband's decease, and give him a fair field for labor and usefulness.

Humanly speaking, it was a professional opening not to be despised.

Mr. Wesley saw all its advantages. The fruit on the Epworth tree was pleasing to the eye. He declined it nevertheless. Why? Had he any better earthly prospects? Not at that moment. What then? Just this: he thought he could be more holy, and therefore more useful, at Oxford than at Epworth. For this reason only, he resolved to remain, for the present, teaching religion and the classics to his pupils at Lincoln College.

His relatives were much displeased with him, his brother Samuel especially; but he stood firm to his purpose—though he seems to have yielded so far as to permit some of his friends to take some steps in his favor toward procuring the living—and, after his father's death, the rectorship passed forever from the Wesley family.

One can scarcely help feeling that Wesley's relatives, with their light, were right in wishing John to become his father's successor. But now, with the light of his grand life shining upon the

circumstances, we can see that he did precisely right. Had he put his light under the Epworth "bushel," the world would have suffered unspeakable loss. His declination of Epworth Parish, though he knew it not at that time, was a step toward his induction into that grander parish which recognized no limits but those of the earth itself. Not Epworth, but the world, was to be John Wesley's parish.

Wesley is now thirty-two years old. A letter from Epworth bids him and Charles hasten to the chamber where the good old rector, worn out by labors abundant and manifold infirmities, is waiting for the coming of the death-angel. The brothers obey the summons. They find their father mellow with age, and ripe for immortality. Standing by his bedside, they gaze with misty eyes upon his venerable face.

"Do you suffer much, father?" asks John, in tones of sympathy.

Fixing his dim eyes steadfastly on his son, the dying man replies:

"Yes: but nothing is too much to suffer for

heaven. The weaker I am in body, the stronger and more sensible support I feel from God."

A day or two after, he places his trembling hand on the head of Charles, and says, prophetically:

"Be steady! The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom. You shall see it, though I shall not."

"Are you near heaven?" inquires John, shortly before his father's death.

The face of the dying rector grows radiant with the light of hope, as he distinctly and firmly answers:

"Yes, I am."

"Are the consolations of God small with you, father?"

"No, no, no!" is the emphatic response.

Then, after calling each of his children present by name, he adds: "Think of heaven, talk of heaven! All the time is lost when we are not thinking of heaven."

At last the hour of his departure strikes. John prays, while the other children kneel around the bed. Mrs. Wesley's intense feeling does not

allow her to be present. The prayer is ended. With feeble voice, the rector whispers:

“Now you have done all.”

Again the voice of John is heard commending the soul of his father to God. It ceases. The room is silent as the grave. They open their eyes, but the rector of Epworth is gone. His body is before them, clothed with the pale grandeur of death; *he* is with the Church of the first-born in heaven, beholding the matchless splendor of his Lord, and rapturously swelling the song of the Lamb, by whose precious blood he had been redeemed. Can any thing on earth be more beautiful than such a death? It was, indeed, fitting that this tried, scarred Christian warrior should pass thus peacefully to his reward.

The manner of his death brought comfort to his widow's heart, which had been so disturbed by the strain of separation from the husband of her youth and the father of her nineteen children, that she had fallen in a fit several times when in his sick-chamber. “Now,” she exclaimed, “I am heard in his having so easy a death, and I am

strengthened to bear it." How mighty are the consolations of our merciful God !

You will be shocked to learn that, on the very day of the rector's modest funeral, a woman, to whom he owed about seventy-five dollars, seized his widow's cattle to secure the debt. It was a heartless deed, but characteristic of the rude boors who called themselves citizens of Epworth. Such a deed could not have found a perpetrator among a people cultivated by education, and softened by the influences of Christian love. John Wesley gave the greedy woman his note for the amount of the debt, and, after otherwise ministering to his mother's comfort, returned to Oxford.

In contrast with the Epworth woman's heartlessness toward his mother, let us see how Mr. Wesley treated a poor girl, one cold day, at Oxford. She belonged to one of his schools and came to him, in a half-frozen state, for help. Her appearance touched him deeply, as the sight of suffering always did, and he asked :

"Have you nothing to wear but that linen gown?"

"Sir, this is all I have," replied the child.

He gave her the small contents of his pocket, regretting that his funds were so low. As she left his room, his eye glanced at the pictures which adorned the walls. Immediately his conscience smote him—unjustly, it may be—and he said to himself:

"Will thy Master say, 'Well done, good and faithful steward,' thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O, justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?"

I can not tell you whether he sold his pictures or not; but I do know that this utterance was not a fitful gush of empty sentiment; for his charity at all times was only limited by his means. To help the poor was regarded by him and his fellow-laborers at Oxford as a cardinal duty. Wesley practiced it most rigidly. When his income was only one hundred and fifty dollars, he gave away ten; when it was three hundred, he gave away one hundred and sixty; when it was four hundred

and fifty, he spent three hundred and ten in charity; and when it reached six hundred, he scattered four hundred and sixty among the poor and needy. This was rare charity. He continued it to the end of his long life, as will be seen hereafter, always spending as little upon himself as possible, and taking rich pleasure in deeds of mercy, which emptied his purse, but gladdened sorrowful hearts. A more benevolent man never lived since the days of Him who went about dropping sweet charities among men, as the clouds drop their fatness on the earth.





Chapter VI.

FROM OXFORD TO SAVANNAH.

THE singular piety and remarkable character of Mr. Wesley now attracted the attention of certain gentlemen interested in building up a colony in what is now the State of Georgia. A few months after his father's death, they invited him to become missionary to the colonists and to the Indians in the neighborhood. He objected. They combated his objections so forcibly, that he finally consented, provided his aged mother, now largely dependent upon him, could be brought to favor it. Her reply was in the loftiest spirit of Christian heroism. Nobly disregarding her own needs, she said

“Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice to see them all so employed !”

It was making a great sacrifice to quit the beloved retirement of Oxford, with its sweet friendships and Church prospects, and to enter upon the hardships of missionary life in an infant colony. Yet Wesley cheerfully made it. He was still seeking, with all the ardor of a master passion, to save his soul by acts of self-denial, by prayers, and by deeds of charity. Believing that the toils, perils, and sufferings of preaching to rude colonists and savage Indians, would make him more acceptable to God, he now accepted the call in the spirit of a brave warrior girding himself for the battle. "My chief motive," he says, "is the hope of saving my own soul." For this grand end he was prepared to suffer even unto death. This was lofty spiritual heroism; but he was singularly blind in supposing that he could achieve his glorious purpose by doing good works and trusting in them. Happily for him and the world, this trip to Georgia will help remove the scales from his eyes, and prepare him to see that his soul can not be saved by works, but only by simple faith in Jesus.

Imagine our earnest missionary, with his brother Charles—who goes as secretary to Governor Oglethorpe—his friend Ingham, and young Delamotte—a merchant's son, who, from pure love, accompanies him as his servant—on board the *Simmonds*. She is not a stately ship, like one of our modern swift-sailing clippers, nor a palatial steamship, but a clumsy, broad-beamed, slow-sailing vessel of that period, with no elegance, and few conveniences for the comfort of even cabin passengers.

But our great-hearted Wesley finds no fault. Luxurious appointments have no charms for his ascetic tastes. He even eschews much of the comfort he finds on the ship, and at once adopts all the strictness of his Oxford life. He and his companions eat sparingly, only twice a day, after they get fairly out to sea, living chiefly on rice and biscuit. No idleness is indulged in; but every waking moment is spent in hard study, in prayer, in spiritual conversation, in preaching or talking religion to their fellow-passengers, especially those in the steerage. They make the ship a bethel, and every day a Sabbath.

Their gravity and fidelity give offense to some of the cabin passengers, a few of whom begin treating them with improper levity. This rouses Governor Oglethorpe, who is very friendly with the Wesley brothers. He turns his leonine face toward the scoffers, and sharply asks:

"What do you mean, sirs? Do you take these gentlemen for tithe-pig parsons? They are gentlemen of learning and respectability. They are my friends. Whoever offers any affront to them, insults me."

Governor Oglethorpe was not a man to be trifled with. In his younger days he was secretary to Prince Eugene, in Germany, and while at his table, one day, a prince of Würtemberg threw a portion of a glass of wine in his face.

"That's a good joke," said young Oglethorpe, smiling, "but we do it much better in England."

And with these words, he dashed a glass full of wine into the prince's face.

The would-be scoffers at Mr. Wesley, on board the *Simmonds*, probably knew this anecdote concerning their reprover. At any rate, they ceased

their levity, and treated the missionary and his little party with marked respect to the end of the voyage.

But Wesley had no fear of this military lion, when duty required that he should confront him. Hearing the general in a high passion, one day, he steps into his cabin, and finds him fiercely berating his trembling Italian servant, who stands cowering and trembling in a corner. No sooner does Wesley show himself than the general, half ashamed of his own temper, says, by way of apology :

“You must excuse me, Mr. Wesley. I have met with a provocation too great for man to bear. You know that I drink nothing but Cyprus wine. I provided myself with several dozens of it, and this villain, Grimaldi, has drunk nearly the whole of it. But I will be revenged. He shall be tied hand and foot, and carried to the man-of-war.” (A war-ship was sailing as convoy to the *Simmonds*.) “The rascal should have taken care how he used me so ; for I never forgive.”

Fixing his penetrating eye on the exasperated

general, Mr. Wesley calmly replies, "Then I hope sir, you never sin!"

This sharp rejoinder strikes hard on the general's conscience. He stands confounded a moment or two, looking wonderingly at his faithful reprover. Then, taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, he throws them at the poor, cringing Grimaldi, exclaiming:

"There, villain, take my keys; and behave better for the future!"

This rebuke was a brave act. Probably no other man in that ship would have thus dared to beard the irascible soldier. But our Wesley had a lion heart.

The *Simmonds* left Cowes in December, always a stormy season on the wide Atlantic. About the middle of January she encountered a very terrible gale. The seas ran very high. The winds roared furiously. An immense wave broke over the ship, swept her from stem to stern, dashed in her cabin windows, and carried away the main-yard. A week later, in a second gale, she shipped a sea which came very near sweeping Wesley overboard. Two

days later, the wind blew a perfect hurricane. The ship rolled and rocked fearfully. The foaming waves, seething and boiling, seemed bent on her destruction. The air blazed with terrific sheets of lightning. A mighty wave, breaking over the deck, swept the "companion-way" into the sea, and the main-sail was torn into shreds. The hearts of many trembled with fear, lest they should find an untimely grave at the bottom of the angry deep.

The gale was at its height at the hour of a vesper service, held every day by twenty-six Moravians, who were going out as settlers in the new colony. Wesley, as usual, was among them. He observed that they were perfectly calm amid the roar of the elements, and that when their voices joined in the evening hymn, they rang out as round, as full, as joyous as they had in the stillest hours of the voyage. Evidently the prospect of instant death had no terrors for them. Many of the English passengers were screaming through fear. These pious Germans were joyfully waiting their fate.

Wesley gazes with wonder at this beautiful spectacle of Christian triumph over the fear of death. His own heart is ill at ease, and shrinking from his probable contact with the mysteries of death. After the danger has passed, he asks one of these Moravians:

“Were you not afraid?”

“I thank God, no!” replies the good man, wondering, probably, that a learned and godly minister should ask such a question.

“But were not your women and children afraid?” persists Wesley.

“No: our women and children are not afraid to die,” is the triumphant rejoinder.

Do you wonder that Wesley wrote in his Journal, that night, these significant words:

“This was the most glorious day I had ever seen!”

No doubt it was so, in more senses than one. It had not only shown him the grand moral spectacle of Christian faith triumphing over human fear, but it had begotten questionings within himself as to whether his way of trying to save his

soul was not, after all, a mistaken one. Blessed questionings, these! They will cling to him and give him much unrest, but they will spur him at last into the true and living way.

After fifty-five busy days spent in crossing the rough Atlantic, Wesley finds himself under the pines on the sunny banks of the Savannah River. The climate, the landscape, the sky, the little town, the trees, the birds, the Indians, are all clothed with the charms of novelty, tempting the curiosity of an intelligent stranger, and inviting him to observation or repose. But Wesley is dead to every thing except spiritual aims. He is scarcely landed, when, meeting with the Moravian elder, Spangenberg, he asks, as almost his first question:

“How had I better act in this new sphere of labor?”

Spangenberg, anxious, probably, to ascertain if this young Episcopal clergyman is a genuine disciple of his Master, responds by this inquiry, which sorely puzzles our learned “Fellow of Lincoln:”

"My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?"

These are points beyond the present range of our young missionary's experience. He stands perplexed and silent. Spangenberg resumes:

"Do you know Jesus Christ?"

This was more familiar language, and he replies:

"I know he is the Savior of the world."

"True," rejoins the faithful elder, "but do you know he has saved *you*?"

This is leading him again beyond his experience, and, with an uneasy spirit, he replies:

"I hope he has died to save me."

"Do you know yourself?" said the persistent Spangenberg.

"I do," rejoined Wesley, somewhat evasively.

This conversation satisfied neither party. It left the good Moravian in doubt respecting the spiritual standing of the handsome young English priest; it filled Wesley with fresh questionings

respecting himself. These will trouble him sorely for a time, but will prove good seed at length, bringing forth fruit richer and sweeter than any that shall ever grow in the orange-groves of the sunny land in which they were begotten.





Chapter VII.

MISSIONARY WORK IN GEORGIA.

THE depth and toughness of Mr. Wesley's noble character are shown by the unwavering constancy with which he adhered to his plan of life. His earnest soul desired no holidays, no respites from the ardor of her grand pursuit. Not even the careless, slipshod life of a new colony could charm him to laxity in practice, or to indulgence in even temporary repose. But as he had taken up the thread of his Oxford life the moment his feet pressed the deck of the *Simmonds*, so he continued it, from the very hour of his landing under the sweet-scented magnolias and fragrant pines of Savannah to the last moment of his brief missionary career in Georgia.

He began by holding a public service of prayer every morning and evening, by forming a society of congenial spirits, to meet three times a week for reading, singing, and prayer, by visiting his parishioners from house to house, and by catechising the children.

On Sundays he held three public Sabbath services, besides a prayer-meeting in his own house at night. (At one time he held *seven* services.) He administered the communion every week, visited the sick constantly, and preached faithfully against "putting on gold and wearing costly apparel." He rebuked prevailing vices with unsparing fidelity, and insisted upon a routine of outward religious observances as strict as the one he had adopted for himself. In addition to all this, he made frequent visits to Fredrica and other neighboring settlements. He would have gone to the Indians; but that was deemed impossible at that time. On these journeys, he often waded rivers and streams, and crossed swamps overflowed with water, walking afterward in his dripping garments. Sometimes he slept at night on

the bare ground, waking in the morning to find his body wet with dew, and, in Winter, his long and beautiful hair bound to the earth by chains of frost. He bore this hard service with heroic fortitude, and he never paused in his work. Literally, his whole time was spent in seeking through such labors the great object of his life-passion—the salvation of his soul.

The colonists, who were a motley collection of some five hundred persons, composed of poor debtors from England, criminals from Ireland, Scotch adventurers, with a sprinkling of German and French, did not relish these stern views of the claims of religion. They were at first deeply impressed by the unwonted earnestness and rare purity of their young minister. How could they help it? Such a character was a phenomenon in those days. But as they had no inclination to become anchorites, High Churchmen, or even spiritual Christians, they soon became restive, and then hostile. Some spoke lightly of his teaching; others said his sermons were satires intended to abuse his hearers; and still others exclaimed, “We

are Protestants, but we don't know what you are." A stout virago in his parish carried her opposition so far as to decoy him into her house, one day. There she threw him down, and, with her scissors, cut the long locks of auburn hair from one side of his head. He bore this rude insult with his accustomed meekness, and even appeared in the pulpit with his hair long on one side and short on the other. Those who sat on the short side, whispered to one another:

"What a cropped head of hair the young parson has!"

Thus did Wesley receive the blessing of persecution for righteousness' sake.

Matters were made worse by his High Church practices. Among other things, he insisted on baptizing infants by dipping them in the font, and refused the sacrament to one person because he had not been baptized by an Episcopal minister! Strange doings, these, for the man who in his after-life became the most liberal of Churchmen! No wonder that, years afterward, when speaking of this portion of his ministry, he wrote:

"Can any one carry High Church zeal higher than this? How well have I been since beaten with mine own staff!"

We scarcely wonder, therefore, that those ungodly colonists became angry with their godly minister, especially as his faithful rebukes were not tempered by such offers of forgiveness for sin through simple faith in the loving Redeemer as are authorized by the Gospel. Law, not love; good works, instead of the "faith that sweetly works by love," were his favorite themes. Of course, such preaching could only disturb, without healing, the consciences of his hearers. It made them see their guilt, but failed to lead them to the Fountain of healing.

Why did not Wesley preach present salvation through faith? The reason was in himself. His struggling soul was still shrouded in mist on that subject. He was bravely striving to save his own soul by works, and consequently did not know that his own sins were pardoned. He was made to feel this keenly one day, during a terrific thunder-storm, of which he says:

"This voice of God, too, told me I was not fit to die; since I was afraid rather than desirous of it! O, when shall I wish to be dissolved and be with Christ?"

The hour of his triumph over the fear of death is not very distant, though he knows it not. Meanwhile, being himself a *servant* only, he can only preach as a servant to his angry people. By and by he will be a *son*, and then we shall see him not merely giving offense to sinners, but, after wounding, leading them by thousands into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Wesley loved children, and spared no pains in teaching them the love of Jesus. They loved him in return, and several of them became loving little disciples of his Lord.

One day his young friend Delamotte went to him in great trouble. Said he:

"Mr. Wesley, I am discouraged. Some of the boys in my school wear stockings and shoes, and the others none. The former ridicule the latter. I have tried to stop their uncourteous banter, but have failed."

"I can cure it," replied Mr. Wesley. "If you will take charge of my school next week, I will take charge of yours, and will try."

The exchange was made. On Monday morning, Wesley walked to the disturbed school *bare-foot*. The children gazed at the unwonted sight with wonder; but Wesley kept them closely to their work, and said nothing of their past misconduct. The example of their teacher gave prestige to the barefooted boys. In fact, bare feet became the fashion; and, before the week was out, the banterers left their shoes and stockings at home, and peace was restored to the school.

Whether this method of training unruly boys was judicious, I am scarcely prepared to decide. The circumstances and habits of the colonists may have justified it. But the fact illustrates the ingenuity, the humility, and the simplicity of the great man's character.

You will be interested to learn that while Wesley was at Savannah, he narrowly escaped marriage with a charming young lady, named Sophia Christiana Hopkey. She is described as a beau-

tiful girl, elegant in person and manners, and well connected withal, but by no means fitted to be the wife of a man with whom the service of God was the ruling passion. She appears to have been fascinated at first with the beautiful person, gentle manners, and cheerful spirit of the young minister, and began, shortly after his arrival, to seek his society. She introduced herself—the sly maiden—as a seeker of religion, which was a shrewd way, to say the least, of approaching him on his most accessible side. She next sought his aid in acquiring the French language, thus showing a zeal for learning very pleasing to so scholarly a man. When he was taken sick with fever, she insisted, with too slight regard for maidenly proprieties, on being his nurse by day and night. To gratify his known tastes, she laid aside her fashionable style of dress, and clothed herself in simple white. She resorted, in short, to every feasible method of laying seige to his noble and susceptible heart.

Whether she really loved and desired to marry him, can not now be known. Some of Mr. Wesley's

friends thought she did not, but that her object was only to lure him from the strictness—fanaticism, some of his colonial friends called it—of his religious life. They claimed that she was urged to bring him under her influence for this purpose by her uncle, Mr. Causton, the magistrate of Savannah, but a scurvy villain at heart. General Oglethorpe, the governor, it was thought, encouraged her, hoping she would marry the young ascetic, and tone down his religious life into something like conformity to the common standard among Church people. Such a modification of his character would, in the general's opinion, have made Mr. Wesley a perfect minister. But the general's judgment was in this thing, most certainly, far, very far, from being perfect.

However these things may have been, it is pretty clear that the elegant girl won the young priest's heart. He was often in her company, corresponded with her, escorted her from Fredrica to Savannah, and was so obviously a lover, that their intimacy became a topic of public remark.

Young Delamotte, Wesley's friend and volunteer

servant, perceiving how matters stood, and estimating the young lady's character at something like its real value, spoke slightly of her, one day, and asked:

"Do you mean to marry Miss Hopkey, Mr. Wesley?"

Wesley gave an evasive answer. But the question startled him, and, with a simplicity bordering on folly, he submitted this delicate and purely personal matter to the decision of his Moravian friends. They advised him not to marry Sophia. His *heart* seems to have rebelled against their judgment, and he would probably have married her after all, if she had truly loved and clung to him. But she was either fickle or false, or both; and when a frivolous young man, named Williamson, proposed marriage, she accepted, and, four days after, married him.

Wesley was, as he confessed, "pierced through as with a sword" by this sore disappointment. But it was a blessing in disguise. The woman was not worthy of a man of his high character and wonderful destiny. Their marriage might have


chilled the zeal that afterward made him the mighty spiritual reformer. Her religious mask fell off, shortly after her marriage, and Wesley felt it to be his painful duty to repel her from the communion-table. This official—probably unwise—act led her friends to commence a fierce persecution, and finally to prosecute him in the courts. Then the voices of the wicked roared like strong lions against the unflinching reprovcr of their vices. Their persecution failed to spot his pure garments. But their emnity closed the doors of usefulness so fast against him, that he judged it best to quit the colony, and return to England, after having spent nearly two years of zealous toil for those ungrateful colonists.

His work at Savannah is done. He is on the ocean once more, teaching, preaching, writing, and praying, as he sails. On the 1st of February, 1737, his feet are once more on his native soil, and his longing eyes are still fixed, with intense earnestness on the crown of life which he is still striving to win by vain attempts to keep God's perfect law.



Chapter VIII.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

HILE Wesley was sailing into port, the celebrated pulpit orator, George Whitefield was sailing down the British channel on his way to Savannah. As this son of thunder was, for a time, intimately related to Wesley's work, it is proper that you should know something of his remarkable history.

George Whitefield was the son of an innkeeper in the city of Gloucester. His early boyhood gave little promise of the rich spiritual fruit which his manhood bore in luxuriant clusters. When he was ten years old, a religious book touched his heart, and gave color to his future life. At the grammar-school of St. Mary de Crypt, where he prepared for college, he was noted for his rare

power as a speaker and declaimer. When he was fifteen years old, his mother's reduced circumstances compelled him to quit school and serve as pot-boy or drawer in her tavern. But hearing that he might go to college as a *servitor*—a student who earns his living by waiting on other students—he resumed his studies at the grammar-school; entered Pembroke College, Oxford, when he was eighteen, and studied, prayed, and toiled with unwearied diligence.

After some time, he was introduced to the Wesleys, and became a member of the "Holy Club." Bitter persecution followed this step. The head of his college threatened to expel him, his fellow-students laughed at him, pelted him with dirt, and refused to pay him for the menial services he rendered some of them as servitor. But nothing could daunt his heroic soul. He clung to the holy brotherhood, fasted like an anchorite, prayed like a saint, and long before the Wesleys found peace with God, his soul laid hold upon Christ by simple faith, and was exceedingly happy.

While the Wesleys were in Georgia, Whitefield

kept up the conflict at Oxford, until he was ordained, at twenty-one years of age. He then began preaching,—first at Gloucester, then at Bristol, afterward at London, with very startling spiritual effects. But a letter from Wesley, asking help for Georgia, led him to embark for that colony, and to sail, as stated above, a few hours before John Wesley landed at Deal. Like Wesley, he made the ship a bethel, and was so popular with some soldiers on board, that they stood up and suffered him to catechise them as if they were children.

His rare eloquence captivated Wesley's old parishioners at Savannah. They crowded his church, and hung upon his lips with delight, during his brief stay of sixteen weeks. Two causes led to his speedy return to England: 1. He wished to be ordained priest or elder; 2. He wanted money with which to found an orphan's college in Georgia. We shall see him by and by, hand in hand with our Wesley, spreading the holy fire of a great awakening, from the mines of Cornwall to the Highlands of Scotland.

Writing from Savannah, Whitefield said: "The

good Mr. John Wesley has done in America, under God, is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people."

This testimony, from so competent a witness, shows you that Wesley's labors in Savannah were far from being fruitless, although he had seen little fruit while there. The people had learned from his absence the worth of his grand character, which they had previously lightly esteemed. Whitefield reaped the fruit of Wesley's labors.

John Wesley is now thirty-five years of age. Thirteen years have passed since he began to seek the salvation of his soul, by trying to keep the law of God. These years have been spent in such earnest work as few men ever perform. His eye has been steadfastly fixed on the grand object of his pursuit. He has, with rare force of will, made every thing in and about him subserve his high purpose. Though uncertain of Divine favor, he has heroically persisted in doing the Divine will, so far as he has understood it. He has shrunk from nothing he thought right. Literally, his whole nature has been absolutely devoted

to the service of God. Noble, true-hearted man! The end of his fierce strife is at hand, and we shall soon behold him flying, like a happy angel, over the land, wielding the sword of the Spirit with a vigor which will prove that the force which nerves his arm is more than mortal might.

After landing in England, he proceeds to visit his friends in London and Oxford, preaching and exhorting continually. In the former city he meets with a good Moravian brother, named Peter Bohler. They talk of religion with burning hearts. Peter soon discovers that his learned friend is prevented from enjoying peace of mind because of certain errors of opinion; and, looking very tenderly into his serious face, he says feelingly:

“My brother, my brother! that philosophy of yours must be purged away.”

They part. Wesley thinks deeply on the questions raised by Peter, until, going to Oxford, some days later, to see his brother Charles, who was supposed to be dying, he meets Peter Bohler again. Their conversation is renewed, until Wesley, with genuine humility, confesses:

"I am clearly convinced of unbelief—of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."

Then his high sensitive conscience smites him, and presses this question upon him :

"You must leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?"

This inquiry troubles him, and, with his wonted openness, he states it to Peter, and asks :

"Should I leave off preaching, or not?"

With sound good sense, Peter rejoins :

"By no means."

"But what can I preach?" urges the distressed Wesley.

"Preach faith *till* you have it ; and then, *because* you have it, you will preach faith."

They separate. Wesley now preaches faith, in several parts of England, with all the vigor of a great mind intensely fired by an earnest heart. People are startled into thoughtfulness, but are not saved. He can, as yet, only lead them *to* the door, not *through* it. But meeting Bohler again, he is told that :

"Dominion over sin, and constant peace from a

sense of forgiveness, attend the exercise of saving faith."

He is amazed at this statement. He has never supposed that a *sense of forgiveness* was his privilege. But he promises to search for the doctrine in his Greek Testament. He does this with much prayer. Light breaks in upon his mind; and when he meets Peter, a month later, he confesses to have found the blessed doctrine in the Sacred Word, very much to his friend's satisfaction, and to the increase of his own hopes.

And now Peter renews his astonishment, by declaring that the blessing of pardon and of a new heart is graciously given to a penitent *the moment he trusts in Christ*.

"Impossible?" cries the still incredulous Wesley.

"Search the Scriptures, and see," replies Bohler.

Again is our scholar confounded by the simple Word of God. He finds scarcely any other than *instantaneous* conversions recorded in the sacred page. He frankly confesses this, but adds:

"Thus, I grant, God wrought in the first ages of Christianity; but the times are changed. What

reason have I to believe he works in the same manner now?"

This question is answered by the introduction of several living witnesses, who say to him:

"God gave us such a faith as translated us, *in a moment*, out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness."

This testimony settles the question, and he exclaims:

"Here my disputing ends. I can only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief!'"

Acting under Peter's advice, while still eagerly praying for this faith, he preaches his new views of it and of its instant effects. His intimate friends, including his brother Charles, take offense. Churches are closed against him. Excitement spreads wherever he goes. But the doctrine soon begins to cut its own way, like a sword of heavenly temper. Souls begin to experience the sweet fruits of faith—among them his brother Charles. But poor John is still harassed by perplexities of mind, downcast in spirit. But he heroically keeps up the struggle, praying every moment:

“Lord, give me a full reliance on the blood of Christ, shed for *me*; a trust in him as *my* Christ, as *my* sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.”

It is now the 24th of May, 1738. At five in the morning, he opens his Greek Testament, and these words meet his eye :

“There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the Divine nature.”

This encourages him. On going out, he opens his Testament again, and is comforted by the words, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.”

In the afternoon he attends Divine service at St. Paul’s, where the anthem encourages his hopes. In the evening he goes to a little society meeting, in Aldersgate Street. Behold him seated, with sad expression, among a few poor, earnest seekers of his Lord, listening to a man reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans! About a quarter before nine, the speaker describes the change which God works in the heart through

faith. Wesley's prayer for faith now becomes the breathing of faith. In a moment his heart is "strangely warmed," and sends up a spontaneous prayer for his enemies—the first gush of the love begotten in him by the Holy Spirit. Very soon the speaker stops. Wesley rises, his face radiant with heavenly light, and says :

"I now, for the first time, feel in my heart that I trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation. I have an assurance that he has taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death !"

Thus at last, did the dove of heaven descend with the olive-leaf of peace, to comfort and heal this great man's heart, which was scarred with wounds received in a spiritual battle continued, with unflinching courage, through thirteen long years. But the victory was worth all its cost, and immeasurably more ; for what is all the wealth, glory, and pomp of earth, compared with that peace which God had now given him ?

Wesley's victory was not yet complete. He had peace, but not joy ; he had dominion over

himself, but he had to win it through fierce temptations. His hand was on the cross, but his grasp was feeble, like that of a babe in Christ. He longed for the mature strength of a man in Christ Jesus. Nothing less than the fullness of the Gospel promise would satisfy his great soul.

His beloved and wise friend, Peter Bohler, had sailed for America; and Wesley, longing for counsel, turned his eager eyes toward Peter's friends, among the Moravian settlements in Germany. Thither, therefore, he journeyed. He spent several weeks among that godly but singular, and in some respects mistaken, people, seeking the confirmation of his faith and the solution of his remaining doubts. Their preaching and conversation did him much good. He grew in grace rapidly, and returned to England in the Autumn, strong in God, and prepared for that great battle with a dead Church and wicked world, which he carried on with peerless courage and wonderful success to the end of his days.



Chapter IX.

FIRST FRUITS OF HIS NEW-BORN FAITH.

HERETOFORE, we have seen our illustrious founder toiling for the good of others, in the spirit of a servant hoping to gain his Master's favor by burdensome services. Hereafter we shall see him working in the spirit of a glad son, offering his manifold labors at his beloved Father's feet, as tokens of his gratitude, as the rich fruits of his trust for salvation in Jesus only.

This fruitful faith did not increase the *quantity* of his labors. That was impossible. But it improved their *quality* vastly. Formerly, his sermons offended many, but saved very few. Now, their power over men's consciences is so intensified that people are mightily awakened, and cry to

God for mercy wherever he preaches. That memorable hour in which he felt his heart "strangely warmed," had been to him a Pentecostal season—the beginning of that constant baptism of heavenly fire which burned with even flame, and made him a man of power to the end of his days. Blessed baptism! May it descend on the reader, and make him a burning and shining light in the Church of God forever!

"Sir, you must preach here no more."

Such is the sentence pronounced, by minister and warden, in church after church, as our Wesley descends from the pulpit, until there remains scarcely a church open to his ministrations, in London or its vicinity. His searching denunciations of sin, his clear views of simple faith, his doctrines of instantaneous conversion and the witness of the Spirit, his intense earnestness, and the startling effects produced on his hearers, give sore offense to sleepy wardens and dead ministers. And in those days a majority of Church ministers knew as little of the spirit of piety as the boards of the pulpits from which they droned their

lifeless sermons to congregations, composed, in the main, of persons who, like themselves, were ignorant of the power of godliness, being "dead in trespasses and sins."

These rebuffs would have shamed a man of feeble purpose into silence. But Wesley's calm courage is more than equal to the occasion. He may be shut out of churches; but all England can not silence him, except by depriving him of liberty or life. Prisons, almshouses, cottages, and the rooms of the "religious societies," are open to him, and in them he proclaims the "Word of Life" with wondrous power.

These "religious societies" were small gatherings of godly people who met to pray, sing, read the Scriptures, help one another, and to devise works of charity. They had existed in London, and many other places, for more than half a century. Their members welcomed our exile from church pulpits to their rooms, and in them the Lord wrought marvelous things among the ungodly, who crowded to hear him and his brother Charles.

Whitefield had now returned from Georgia, to beg money for a projected orphan-house in that colony. After a short stay in London, he went to Bristol. There the "chancellor" forbade him to preach within the diocese, without a license, on pain of expulsion from the ministry. Whitefield, like his friend Wesley, had a lion's heart. He would not be wrongfully gagged by ecclesiastical authority. Save souls he would; regularly if permitted, irregularly if necessary. Hence, he resolved on what was, in those days, and in his circumstances, a very bold step. He would preach in the open air!

Looking about him for a suitable place to begin this unchurchly but Christ-like deed, he saw Kingswood,—once a royal hunting-ground, where noble knights and courtly dames pursued the wily fox or timid deer; but now a spot honey-combed with coal-mines, and inhabited by crowds of rough, hard men, of brutal habits, and fearless alike of God or man. None cared for their souls. Dainty Churchmen, living at their ease in richly endowed parishes, like priest and Levite in the road to

Jericho, looked scornfully on those poor, spiritually wounded, and imbruted colliers, and "passed by on the other side." To them Whitefield now determined to preach the glorious Gospel of love and purity.

Behold him going out, on a cold day in February, among these almost savage miners. Standing upon an eminence, unprotected save by invisible powers, his clear, far-reaching voice is raised in prayer, in sermon, and in song. Two hundred souls come together, and listen in gloomy silence. What that silence may portend, the orator can not tell. But resolved to go forward, with more than knightly courage, he appoints a second service. Two thousand people gather around him, and hang upon his lips. He is encouraged, and goes again and again. At his fifth service, ten thousand souls are present, and on many a coal-stained face the white channels, formed by running tears, assure the preacher that God is using him as a hammer to break those rocky hearts in pieces.

At this unwonted spectacle, his soul takes fire.

He preaches with mighty power, not at Kingswood only, but at other points in and about Bristol. In one place his congregation covers three acres of ground, and numbers twenty thousand souls! The scene is awful. Profound silence obtains throughout the vast throng. The clear voice of the preacher lines the hymn. The tune is raised, and taken up by the crowd from front to rear, until the singing becomes as the voice of many waters. During the sermon, every sound is hushed but the voice of the eloquent preacher, ringing soft, yet clear and strong, to the very outskirts of the grand assembly. As he proceeds, the people are subdued. Every heart is melted and every face drenched with tears. So solemn is the spectacle that, at times, the preacher himself is overcome, and can scarcely proceed with his discourse. Truly, as one observed, the Divine fire was kindled in the country. The grand revival which was to shake all England was fairly begun.

Meanwhile Wesley was producing remarkable results by his preaching in London, though, as

yet, in narrower spheres than these monster assemblies. The power of God rested on his hearers so mightily that many often "cried for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground." On one occasion, awe and amazement at the presence of the Divine Majesty held them, as if spell-bound, for a season, when, as with one voice, the company exclaimed:

"We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord!"

One evening, while Wesley is speaking, a woman cries out in anguish of spirit, as if in the agonies of death. He asks her to visit him the next day. She does so, and on being questioned, replies:

"Three years ago I was under conviction for sin, and in such terror that I had no comfort in any thing, nor any rest day or night. I sent for my minister, and told him my distress. He told my husband that I was stark mad, and advised him to send for a physician. He did so. The physician came, bled and blistered me, but gave me no relief. I continued in my distress until last evening, when He whose word is 'sharper

than any two-edged sword,' gave me a faint hope that he would heal my soul."

A few days later, he is present with a lady who opposes this "*new way*," as she calls his doctrines, with rage and bitterness. After talking awhile, he says to her:

"Come, madam, let us join in prayer."

She consents, and kneels down. Wesley prays. She is soon thrown into a great agony of body and soul. He prays on until she interrupts him, exclaiming earnestly and joyfully:

"Now I know I am forgiven for Christ's sake!"

Such incidents as these, constantly occurring, draw crowds to the meetings wherever Wesley appears. Public attention is aroused. The great revival is beginning in London as well as in Bristol.

Feeling anxious to proceed with his plan of raising funds for his Georgia orphan-house, Whitefield now writes to London, inviting Wesley to visit Bristol, and carry on the good work begun there. This is an important call. How will Wesley answer it?

At this time Wesley belonged to a religious

society which met in Fetter Lane, and was composed largely of Moravians. Its rules required that a member, before taking a journey, should consult his brethren. Accordingly, Wesley asked his band, Shall I go to Bristol? Unable to agree, after much disputation, they resorted to *sortilege*, or the lot. And the lot said, "Go."

Before this, however, Wesley and his brother had tried to settle the question by appealing to the Oracles of God. Opening the Bible at random, they took the first text which met the eye, as God's answer to their inquiry. In this case, through several trials, every text seemed adverse, and even threatening. And such was the faith of both brothers, at that time, in this method of ascertaining the Divine will, that, after the lot had been drawn and Wesley had determined to go, Charles felt "an unaccountable fear that it would prove fatal to him," and John himself left London feeling like a warrior departing to encounter the unknown dangers of the battle-field, with a presentiment of evil in his heart.

This practice of seeking answers from God in

chance texts of Holy Writ, was not peculiar to the Wesleys. Many good people have followed it in the past, and a few do it even now. It is not to be commended. There is no authority for it in the Scriptures. It smacks of superstition, and is quite as apt to mislead the inquirer as to guide him aright. That Wesley resorted to it in the early part of his career, is no proof that it is right. Like his High Church notions and his false views of faith, this is a little spot upon his otherwise brilliant sun—a venial fault, which he threw off when he grew older, and stood forth in the full strength of his wonderful character.

Wesley is shocked, on arriving at Bristol, to find that his eloquent friend, Whitefield, has adopted the “strange way of preaching in the fields.” His sense of “decency and order” is wounded. Nevertheless, he goes to one of these grand out-door services the following Sunday. The solemn spectacle impresses him favorably. What he sees among the grateful colliers, who gave Whitefield an ovation on the day of his departure, mollifies him still more. Happening the next day to select

a text from our Lord's beautiful Sermon on the Mount, it occurs to him that this sermon afforded a remarkable precedent for field-preaching. With this thought, his last prejudice melts like an icicle in an April sun. He once held the "saving of souls almost a sin if not done in the church;" but now the example of his Master conquers his church pride. Submitting "to be more vile" than ever in the eyes of haughty prelates, clerical formalists, and respectable Pharisees, he ascends an eminence just outside of Bristol, and preaches Christ to three thousand eager listeners.

That second day of April, 1739, was a memorable day in our Wesley's life. It marked an epoch in his remarkable career, by introducing him to a practice, without which he could never have achieved the great work of his life. It taught him that, though exiled from temples consecrated by human lips, he could preach to England's hosts of spiritually dead souls in the great temples of nature, which were consecrated from the beginning to all holy purposes by the Maker of all things. It saw him unconsciously taking

a step toward the formation of an evangelical body, which, in the providence of God, was destined to spread Scriptural holiness through many lands.

Wesley has now crossed the Rubicon. What is before him he does not know. We shall soon behold him carrying the battle into the very strongholds of old England's sin.

Very shortly after Wesley's arrival in Bristol, extraordinary effects begin to attend his ministrations. Men and women are so powerfully wrought upon that they "cry out aloud with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death." Others are "seized with strong pain, and constrained to roar for disquietness of heart." Still others are taken with "a violent trembling all over, and in a few minutes sink to the ground." At some of his meetings many are struck to the earth suddenly, "as thunderstruck." One day a Quaker who bitterly condemned these manifestations, drops down "as if he had been struck by lightning. The agony he is in is terrible to behold." Another man, named John Haydon, ■

weaver of excellent reputation, but who has denounced these singular operations as delusions of the devil, is seated in his own house, one day, reading a sermon. Suddenly he changes color, falls off his chair, beats himself severely against the floor, and screams so terribly that the neighbors are alarmed, and rush into the house. Some one sends for Wesley, saying:

“John Haydon has fallen raving mad!”

Wesley hastens to the house, where he finds a room-full of people, and two or three men holding the excited weaver, as he screams to his wife, who had been trying to clear the room:

“Let all the world see the just judgment of God!”

Wesley edges his way through the awe-stricken crowd. The prostrate man no sooner sees him than he stretches out his hand, crying:

“Ay, this is he who I said was the deceiver of the people! But God has overtaken me. I said it was all a delusion; but this is no delusion.”

And then he roars: “O thou devil, thou cursed devil! yea, thou legion of devils! thou canst not

stay! Christ will cast thee out! I know his work is begun! Tear me to pieces, if thou wilt, but thou canst not hurt me!"

After this strange utterance, he beats himself upon the ground, his breast heaves as if the pangs of death were upon him, and great drops of sweat trickle down his haggard face.

Wesley proposes prayer; and kneels, surrounded by the almost breathless crowd. Scarcely does he commence wrestling with God, before the man's pangs cease. His soul and body are suddenly "set at liberty."

And this is the usual result of these remarkable paroxysms. The prayers of Wesley and his men of faith prevail to bring their subjects rest in Jesus, after their mighty awakening by the Spirit of God.

What shall we say of these violent exercises of body and mind? Mr. Wesley calls them "signs and wonders." He believed that they came from God, because they were generally followed by the sound conversion of their subjects. Said he to those who caviled at them as fanatical delusions:

"I will show him that was a lion till then, and now is a lamb; him that was a drunkard, and is now exemplarily sober; the whoremonger that was, who now abhors the garments spotted by the flesh."

While such glorious facts reconciled Wesley to these phenomena, they did not satisfy either his friends or his enemies. Most of the former, including even his brothers Charles and Samuel, with his fellow-laborer, Whitefield, condemned them, and blamed him for permitting them. The latter were loud in their censures. They attributed them to the devil, or to nervous affections caused by the preacher's rare magnetic power.

Whatever we may think of these "signs and wonders," we may be sure their philosophy, as given by Wesley's enemies, was false. If his magnetic power produced them, why did they occur principally at Bristol, and rarely elsewhere? Why not wherever he preached? If Satan caused them, he must have been exceedingly short-sighted, inasmuch as they contributed powerfully to the overthrow of his own kingdom. We know that

most of their subjects became decided converts to his Master, and that their existence gave Wesley and his work a national notoriety, thereby moving thousands to hear a man whose ministrations had been attended with such wonders. Was Satan fool enough to help pull down his own kingdom thus?

It should be kept in mind that similar exercises accompanied the great revival in New England, under Edwards, ten years before they were experienced at Bristol. They were present in Wales, where, for three years, Howell Harris had been thundering, like a giant, at the gates of Beelzebub. They also characterized the wonderful revival among the Presbyterians in Scotland, the year following Mr. Wesley's labors in Bristol. And they have occurred, occasionally, at various periods of the history of the Church, both before and since. Is it not safe, therefore, to infer that our merciful God vouchsafes them when the extreme wickedness and skepticism of a nation require some extraordinary displays of spiritual power to rouse it from its slumber on the brink

of destruction? Holding this view, we think they should not be sought after, because of their tendency to fanaticism. God alone can determine when the world needs them. But when they do appear unsought, as in Wesley's case, they should be improved with cautious wisdom. Then let infidels and dead professors scoff, if they choose; but let my young reader beware how he draws the bow and directs the arrow of ridicule at them, lest, haply, he be found fighting against God.

While witnessing the conquests of Christ over the rude colliers at Kingswood and the workingmen of Bristol, Wesley resolved to carry the good tidings to the neighboring city of Bath, at that time the chief seat of England's fashion. Bath had a king of its own, in the person of a noted gamester, named Richard Nash, or Beau Nash, as he was commonly called. This conceited fellow, now sixty-five years of age, had been expelled from Christ Church College in his youth for immoral conduct. At Bath he had become "master of the ceremonies" at the public balls. He made rules for those occasions, which not even royalty itself

dared to break. He appointed the fashions of the hour. He was an exquisite in dress. When he traveled, his carriage was drawn by six gray horses, with postillions, outriders, footmen, and a band of French horns. With singular oddity, he wore an enormous white hat.

When this impudent ruler over the realm of fashion heard that Wesley was to preach in Bath, he openly declared that he would put him down. Knowing his imperious habits, and his influence among the rich, Wesley's tried friends said :

"Mr. Wesley, you had better not attempt to preach. Beau Nash will break up your meeting."

But the man who had stood up for Jesus before the frowning dignitaries of Oxford and the dusty giants of the Kingswood mines, was not the man to quail before an empty-headed dandy. As might be expected, Wesley treated his threats with scorn, went to the place appointed, found a very large congregation, and calmly proceeded with his services.

The sermon is just begun when the Beau, with his big white hat on his head, marches, with

the strut of a stage-king, close up to Mr. Wesley, and haughtily asks:

“By what authority do you dare to hold this service?”

“By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by him who is now Archbishop of Canterbury,” replies Wesley, with quiet dignity.

“But this is a conventicle, and contrary to act of Parliament,” rejoined Nash.

“No. Conventicles are seditious meetings; but here is no sedition: therefore it is not contrary to act of Parliament.”

“I say it is,” retorts the King of Bath, pettishly; “and, besides, your preaching frightens people out of their wits.”

“Sir,” asks Wesley, “did you ever hear me preach?”

“No.”

“How, then, can you judge of what you have never heard?”

“I judge by common report.”

“Common report is not enough. Give me leave to ask you, sir, is not your name Nash?”

"It is," replies the puzzled master of ceremonies.

"Sir," Wesley retorts, with emphasis, "I dare not judge of *you* by common report."

This home-thrust at the gambler's evil reputation confounds him. He stands silent awhile, before the tittering audience, which doubtless enjoys his confusion. Then, rallying himself, he looks on the congregation, and asks:

"I desire to know what this people comes here for?"

Before Mr. Wesley can reply, an old woman's cracked voice is heard saying:

"You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body; we take care of our souls; and for the food of our souls we come here."

The crest-fallen King of Bath is still dumb. With sealed lips and ill-concealed vexation, he walks away. Wesley finishes his sermon. His calm courage and ready wit have covered the lord of fashion with shame and confusion of face.

This incident is, in its spirit, a representative one. Beau Nash had the sympathies of tens of

thousands of Churchmen and Dissenters in his open hostility to Wesley, who was, at this time, like a lamb in the midst of ravening wolves. Rude, vile men frequently tried to break up his meetings. Ministers of high repute wrote bitter pamphlets denouncing him and his associates as Papists, Jesuits, mad dogs, enthusiasts, enemies of the Church, and disturbers of the public peace. The magazines of the day took up the persecuting cries, misrepresented him and his doctrines, exaggerated the "signs and wonders" attending his work, and did their utmost to prejudice the public.

But none of these things moved our noble founder. He preached on—now at Bristol, then at London, and in such other cities as had in them friends bold enough to invite his presence. Wherever he went, sinners were saved. Moved by the promptings of his now mighty faith, working by heavenly love, he toiled incessantly, as unmoved by the roar of his persecutors as is the solid rock by the mad waves which dash in powerless rage at its feet.

About this time (September, 1739), the good

widow of the rector of Epworth delighted her two sons, John and Charles, by telling the former that for the first time in her long life, she knew God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven her all her sins. It was a blessed experience for that elect lady.

This sounds strangely, now that even our children know that the testimony of God's Spirit to the forgiveness of one's sins is given to every one who trusts in the Lord Jesus alone for salvation. In her day, few understood these sweet doctrines, and of those who did, most supposed that it was the privilege of only very few persons to enjoy such a blessed experience. Let us be thankful that we live in an age of spiritual light, and let us be grateful to our Heavenly Father for enabling our good and great Wesley so to teach and diffuse these glorious doctrines, that they are not likely to be ever again lost sight of in the Christian world.



Chapter X.

SEVERAL FIRST THINGS.

THE well-known proverb, "Man proposes, but God disposes," is illustrated very remarkably by Wesley's career. The end he proposed to himself, after finding repose for his soul through faith in Christ, was the quickening of his beloved Church of England. The height of his ambition was, to be instrumental in leading the ministers and congregations of that venerable body back to the pure faith and evangelical experience of the Reformers. The organization of a separate Church was neither in his thoughts nor his desires. When warned, by friend and foe, that such would be the result of his "irregular" labors, he strongly resented the prediction. When the tendency became apparent, he did his

best to check it by strictly attending Church services, the communion especially; by urging his followers to imitate his example, and by refusing, for years, to hold his own meetings during the hours of Church worship. He clung to his original purpose with the grip of a giant, and became an old man before he accepted the idea that the Methodists could preserve and extend the work which he had begun, only by becoming a separate people.

But the great Disposer of events led him, by a way he knew not, to take steps, very early in his evangelical career, which ended in the construction of that stately spiritual edifice called Methodism. Its commencement was in this wise:

The converts in Bristol multiplied until a room for their meetings became a necessity. Wesley then selected a suitable spot of ground. A bargain was made for its purchase. Trustees were appointed to take the title. But the people being too poor to raise the purchase money among themselves, Wesley wrote to Whitefield, his brother Charles, and other friends in London, for assistance.

“We will not assist you,” replied those friends ‘unless you destroy the trustship and become sole proprietor yourself. If trustees hold it, you will be under their control. Unless your preaching pleases them, they will eject you from the house you propose to build.”

This was unanswerable. The trustees dissolved Wesley took the title, directed the building of the chapel, and begged money for its completion. He thus, as you can readily see, became master of the situation in Bristol. By pursuing this same course elsewhere, as chapels multiplied, he held his society with a firm grip. But, after a short time, he vested the titles to all his chapels in trustees, reserving to himself, and his brother after him, the right of controlling their pulpits. This gave him great power in time—too much to be intrusted to one man ordinarily; but our Wesley was not an ordinary man. His high sense of honor and his rare conscientiousness made it next to impossible for him to act with intentional injustice. He never abused his great trust, but employed it faithfully in building up a spiritual people. When

his end drew nigh, he honorably conveyed it to the Wesleyan Conference in his famous "Deed of Declaration."

There was a ruinous old building in London, of great extent, which for nearly a quarter of a century had been falling into decay. It had formerly been used by the Government for casting cannon. While the guns taken from the French, at Blenheim, by the victorious Marlborough, were being recast within its walls, an explosion took place; the roof was blown off, the timbers badly shaken, and several workmen killed and wounded. From that time it had no occupant, until Wesley used it as a preaching-place. The manner in which he was led to do this is, to say the least, curious. To speak more correctly, it was *providential*. He had gone up from Bristol, to raise money for his chapel, probably, when two unknown gentlemen called upon him, and said:

"Mr. Wesley, we very much wish you would preach in the old foundry, near Moorfields."

Wesley questioned them, but would not accept their invitation. They called on him again and

again, until, overcome by their persistence, he reluctantly consented.

Such was his fame, even at that period, that five thousand souls gathered to hear him at eight o'clock in the morning. At five in the evening this vast number was swelled to nearly eight thousand!

This was success indeed. The gentlemen then pressed him to buy "the vast, uncouth heap of ruins." He finally consented; purchased it for a little less than six hundred dollars, fitted it up with galleries, society-room, preacher's house, school, and band-room. Its entire cost was about four thousand dollars. As at Bristol, Wesley assumed all the responsibility, took the title, and thus became the owner of the first Methodist chapel in London, and the second in all England. And this, you see, not out of a purpose originating in his own mind, but from the persausion of two gentlemen, then unknown. Can you fail to see the mysterious leadings of God in thus providing a cradle for London Methodism?

The cradle was prepared; where was the child?

The first Methodist Society was not as yet organized. Thus far, Wesley had belonged to a religious society composed largely of Moravians, meeting in Fetter Lane. But these Moravians soon began to depart from the truth. Bickerings broke out among them, to the injury of the work. Some of them became *Mystics*, teaching unscriptural notions respecting the union of believing souls with God. Others were *Quietists*, who believed in waiting on God *silently*, and neglecting the means of grace. Wesley tried, with loving earnestness, to bring his erring brethren back to the truth. They resented his endeavors, censured him bitterly, and finally expelled him from the pulpit in Fetter Lane. He protested against their errors, and withdrew from their society, with some seventy-five others, whom he organized into a society, under his own supervision, at the foundry, on the 23d of July, 1740. It seems that he had previously met a few serious people in London, at their own request, for religious conversation and prayer; but this was the germinal society of Wesleyan Methodism. It grew rapidly, until now, in a little more than a

century and a quarter, it has become a goodly tree, whose branches spread over the spacious earth, and drop rich spiritual fruit among all nations. Wesley never dreamed, much less aimed, at such vast results. Surely, it is the Lord's doings, and is marvelous in our eyes!

An archbishop, meeting Charles Wesley at Bristol, one day, said :

"I knew your brother well. I could never credit all I heard respecting him and you ; but one thing in your conduct I could never account for, your employing laymen. '

"My Lord," replied Charles Wesley, "the fault is yours and your brethren's."

"How so?" asks the astonished dignitary.

"Because you hold your peace, and the stones cry out."

"But I am told they are unlearned men," urges his lordship.

"Some are, and so the dumb ass rebukes the prophet," the poet wittily replies.

The archbishop was silenced, if not satisfied. But considering that the Wesleys had been known

as High Churchmen, his surprise at their employment of lay preachers was very natural. How came they to do it? Let us see.

Among the first, if not the first, was John Cennick. He was the son of a Quaker, and seems to have given little promise, in his boyhood and youth, of a useful life. One day, while walking along Cheapside, he was suddenly convinced of sin. He forsook his vices at once, but, not knowing the way of the cross, he found no rest. He thought of becoming a monk or a hermit. He fasted long and often; he prayed nine times a day; he lived on potatoes, acorns, crabs, and grass; he tormented himself with fears of ghosts and devils. At last, after three weary years of self-torment, he found peace in Jesus. Like a genuine disciple, he began at once to tell the story of the love which saved him. Wesley met him at Reading, and was pleased with his spirit. In 1739, he invited him to Kingswood to teach a school which he was gathering among his colliers. Cennick gladly obeyed the call, and walked from Reading to Bristol, sleeping one night in a stable on the way

Wesley was in London when Cennick reached Bristol. Not knowing what else to do, he went to Kingswood to hear a young man read a sermon to the colliers. But the reader was not there, though some five hundred colliers were assembled beneath the branches of a sycamore. Cennick, by request, attempted to preach. The Lord tipped his tongue with fire, and many were saved in that very hour.

Thus encouraged, he preached again and again, with like effects. When Wesley returned, and saw what the Lord had done by his instrumentality, he encouraged him to go on, though some of his more cautious brethren were anxious that he should be silenced.

A year or two later, one of his Bristol converts, named Thomas Maxfield, being left in London to meet and pray with the society, almost insensibly began to preach. God made his words sharp arrows, and numbers were saved. Wesley, informed of this fresh irregularity, hastened up to London to stop him. But his good mother, who lived in the preacher's house at the foundry, said to him :

“John, take care what you do with respect to

that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are."

The Countess of Huntingdon, who had heard Maxfield preach, wrote to Wesley, saying, "He is my astonishment." What could Wesley do? He must either give up his High Church notions, or fight against God. Acting like the true man he was, he chose the former, threw his prejudices to the winds, and gladly accepted Maxfield as a helper called of God, though not ordained by men, to assist in spreading holiness through the land.

You have now seen that the first chapel in Bristol ; the Foundry, cradle of London Methodism ; the first Methodist society, and the first lay preachers, were all brought into existence without any prior purpose on the part of our founder. They grew out of circumstances over which he had no control. They were indeed spontaneous creations. They were all contrary to Wesley's preconceived notions. Had he been told, a few years before, that he should countenance them, he would have asked with indignation, "Is thy servant a dog, that he

should do these things?" You may wonder what led him to act so contrary to his first notions of duty and propriety. The answer is simply this: After his soul found rest, through simple faith, he turned from the traditions of men to the Bible. The former had misled him with regard to the way of salvation, and he mistrusted them henceforth, bringing every question of faith and duty, as it arose, to the Word of God for solution. In fact, as he tells us, he became "a man of one book." That is, no book but the Bible exercised any authority over his conscience, except as it agreed with its Divine teachings. Hence, in judging the fitness of such great facts as accepting the aid of lay preachers, forming societies to be under his own pastoral care, and building churches for their use, he no longer looked to the opinions of Churchmen, authors, or bishops, but to the Bible. Of course, he found nothing there to hinder him from following the guidance of God's hand in his work of spreading the glorious Gospel of the blessed Savior. To do this, cost him many valuable friendships, and exposed him to

severe censures and great sufferings. But he had the courage of a man sustained by the faith of a saint. Fixing his eye, therefore, steadily on the "pillar of fire" which went before him, he followed whithersoever it led, through good and ill, to the end of his days.

Earnest men, engaged in a good work, are always earnestly opposed. Great obstacles rise up continually to retard their progress. But it is the glory of such great spirits to trample upon opposition, and, by the force of superior character and Divine co-operation, to hew their way through every obstacle to final success.

Wesley's career illustrates these truths very strikingly. No man's path to renown ever bristled with antagonisms more numerous and varied than those which confronted him. Some of these have been described. You have seen how his self-devotedness surrounded him with bitter adversaries at Oxford, at Savannah, and at Bath. Now that he is just about to commence his great evangelical journeys through Great Britain, new difficulties, from unexpected quarters, confront him. The

friends of his bosom become his enemies. How did it happen?

While the "golden-mouthed" Whitefield was in America, he became enamored with the writings of the old Puritan divines. He returned to England a bigoted Calvinist. Wesley, who had thoroughly studied and intelligently rejected the horrible doctrines of Calvin while at Oxford, preached the beautiful theory of God's impartial love for every creature, and of the honest offer, in the Gospel, of salvation to every living soul who will come to Christ. Finding that many good people were troubled on these questions, he published a sermon, setting forth his views. This offended Whitefield. He insisted that Wesley should be silent on that subject. Of course, the great apostle of the rising reformation could not consent to suppress the marrow of those glorious truths which were stirring the dry bones of a dead Church, and saving sinners by hundreds in London, Bristol, and other places. He kept on preaching "free grace." Then Whitefield made war upon him, reluctantly at first, but bitterly at length.

Howel Harris in Wales, Cennick in Bristol, the Moravians in London, and others of his old friends, soon entered the lists, with strong arms and sharp lances, on Whitefield's side. Wesley was openly denounced. Whitefield wrote against him. Cennick strove to undermine his influence at Bristol by scoffing at his preaching, and by speaking evil of him and his brother. A weekly newspaper was started to assist in carrying on this fratricidal war. Scathing words from every quarter flew around his head, whistling like bullets on a battle-field.

These assaults, on the part of his quondam friends, roused his open enemies to renewed virulence. In addition to their usual practice of insulting and mobbing him while preaching, they circulated the most mendacious lies concerning him. Among other slanderous things, they said that he had been fined one hundred dollars for selling gin; that he kept a Popish priest in his house; that he had hanged himself at Bristol, and was cut down just in time to save his life; and that some thirty of his converts had been sent to bedlam!

These were heavy trials to be endured by an innocent man who was making a daily sacrifice of ease, time, and earthly ambitions for the public good. Wesley suffered them bravely. Buoyant as a noble ship in a stormy sea, he rose above the roar of mobs, the whisperings of enemies, and the revilings of unfaithful friends. He did not permit these things so much as to depress his spirits, much less stop him in his great work. Neither would he recriminate. When Whitefield published his pamphlet against him, a friend asked :

“Do you intend to reply to Mr. Whitefield’s pamphlet, Mr. Wesley?”

“Sir,” said he, “you may read Whitefield against Wesley, but you shall never read Wesley against Whitefield.”

This was noble Christian forbearance. It had its reward; for, although these differences in opinion separated those good men as companions in labor, and led to the formation of “Lady Huntingdon’s connection,” yet their *personal* alienation was of brief duration. Howel Harris, though he

had called Wesley's doctrine "hellish infection," had a loving heart which soon yearned for personal reconciliation with his heroic friend. He procured an interview between the orator and the organizer of Methodism. Love triumphed when they met; and, since they could not think and preach alike, they agreed to differ, and to work apart in the spirit of brotherly love. Thus, you see, meekness hath its victories.





Chapter XI.

OFF TO THE NORTH AND WEST.



WHEN Wesley was thirty-nine years old, four years after his conversion, he received an unexpected call into Yorkshire. Hitherto he had chiefly confined his labors to the vicinities of London and Bristol; but he does not appear to have formed any plan for spreading Methodism through England. But God's hour had come for pushing him out into all the great centers of population. The system had been gradually—accidentally, as it seemed—maturing, until it was capable, by simply growing, of becoming a vast organization. It had a recognized head, with several assistants ready to do his bidding. It had churches, societies just divided into classes, with rules and regulations and a

well-defined purpose. It was, in fact, an almost complete organization. Then the summons to expand the work came, at the same time, from very humble and from very dignified lips.

John Nelson, a working mason, converted under Wesley at Moorfields, had gone back to his home at Birstal, in Yorkshire, like another Stephen, "full of faith and the Holy Ghost." He told the blessed story of his conversion, in homely phrase, but with a tongue of fire, to his family and neighbors. At first they thought he was crazy, but very soon learned that his mind was sounder than theirs. Many of them were converted. Honest John kept on telling his simple story until more came to hear than his house would hold. He then stood on the door-step, and talked to the crowds which gathered without. More were saved. Religious interest was awakened in other places. The sturdy mason talked wherever openings appeared. Converts multiplied on every side. Then he raised the Macedonian cry to Mr. Wesley, entreating him, again and again, to come and direct the blessed work.

At the same time that elect lady, the Countess of Huntingdon, who had laid her coronet, her wealth, and great influence, at the feet of Jesus, also wrote Wesley frequent and pressing letters to visit the north of England; first, because a lady in her household, dying of consumption very much wished to see him; and, secondly, because she was anxious he should try to repeat among the brawny colliers of the Tyne what he had accomplished among the begrimed coal-heavers of Kingswood.

Wesley, unaware of the great things to which this call would lead, lingered among his beloved societies at Bristol and London for some time before accepting it. Finally he set out. After spending three days with the dying lady and her aristocratic friends, at the stately mansion of Donnington Park, the home of Lady Huntingdon, he went to Birstal, and lodged in the humble cottage of the hard-handed, but big-hearted, John Nelson. There was a vast difference between his princely accommodations at Donnington Park and his homely resting-place in the mechanic's cottage.

But he was as content with the one as with the other. He was not seeking ease, but the peace and elevation of immortal souls. With him, all other things were trifles light as air.

The next day, at noon, Nelson took his extraordinary guest to the top of Birstal Hill, and at eight o'clock in the evening of the same Spring day, to Dewsbury Moor, two miles distant. At both of these places he preached with his wonted power. Among the converts, that day, was a young man named Nathaniel Harrison, the reality of whose confession was soon put to the severest tests. His angry father turned him out of doors; his brutal eldest brother horse-whipped him; a furious mob stoned him, and, on one occasion, literally bespattered itself with his blood!

But this heroic Methodist did not flinch. With a martyr's pertinacity, he kept the faith, "resisting unto blood." He had his reward. After living through the fierce persecutions of young Yorkshire Methodism, he spent many years in peace. In his old age—he lived to be fourscore—he was wont to say:

“My soul is always on the wing. I only wait the summons.”

It was by such enduring courage in its first converts, that Methodism stood its ground. Many of its foundation-stones were cemented with blood !

From Birstal, Wesley went to Nottingham. There he preached to tens of thousands in the open air, and, for a wonder, his words awakened no feelings but those of “love and kindness.” The following Sunday we find him at his early home, the village of Epworth. He sent a courteous message to the occupant of his father’s old pulpit, in which he said :

“I shall be pleased to assist you to-day, either by preaching or reading prayers.”

Instead of treating this offer with Christian civility, Romley, the curate, declined his assistance, and preached a sermon against enthusiasts in Wesley’s presence. But the son of Epworth’s old rector was not to be kept silent in his dead father’s parish. As the people were leaving the church, John Taylor, Wesley’s companion, stood and cried :

"Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach in the church-yard, at six o'clock this evening."

This notice electrifies the people. It flies from lip to lip. At the appointed hour, nearly all Epworth is seen flocking to the grave-yard. There, standing on his father's tombstone, the people see the son of their deceased rector ready to declare to them the Word of Life. The circumstances are peculiar and affecting, awakening many tender recollections. Mr. Wesley preaches with unwonted power. Tears and sobs attest the divinity of the truths which he pours forth from his earnest, loving lips. The people go home sober and thoughtful, purposed to hear their old rector's son again on the morrow.

For eight successive nights he preaches over the ashes of his dead father. The effect is startling. The people weep aloud. Several drop to the earth as if smitten by the hand of death. Penitents cry aloud for mercy. Converts, just saved, shout glad words of grateful love. One night a gentleman, who has not heard prayer or

sermon for thirty years, is seen standing rigid and still as a stone man.

"Sir," asks Wesley, "are you a sinner?"

"Sinner enough!" he exclaims, still staring upward. His weeping wife and servant then lead him to his carriage, and take him home.

Thus did Wesley win triumphs for his Lord at Epworth. It is a remarkable fact that nearly every person with whom either he or his father had "taken any pains formerly," found remission of sins on this truly grand occasion.

Scarcely had Wesley returned from his first evangelical tour in the North, before he was summoned to the death-chamber of his noble mother. He found her dying, but happy. On the morning of the day on which she is to ascend to heaven, she exclaims, on waking from sleep:

"My dear Savior! art thou come to help me at my last extremity?"

Presently, after looking around on her two sons and five daughters, she smiles, and says:

"Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God!"

In the afternoon, her pulse is almost still, but her eyes are fixed upward, and her look is calm. Wesley commends her spirit to God, and then they all join in singing a requiem to her departing soul. An hour later, without struggle, groan, or sigh, she falls asleep in Jesus. Then the voices of her children fill the chamber with a song of praise to Him whose love had enabled her to triumph over the fear of death. It was a unique and tender scene—a song of “joy in grief.”

The following Sabbath, an “immense multitude” thronged Bunhill-fields, to listen to a sermon preached by Wesley over her remains. The scene was solemn. The voice of the living son, speaking beside the open grave of the dead mother, fell upon the breathless crowd with effects as impressive as when it was raised, a few weeks before, over his father’s tomb. The one scene was a fitting complement to the other.

The 24th of June, 1744, was a memorable day at the Foundry, in London. Four ordained ministers and four lay preachers met Wesley and his brother there. The sacrament was administered



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SUSANNAH WESLEY.

to more than two thousand souls! These had been gathered into the London society during the five preceding years. The scene was a solemn and imposing one. It must have been good to be there.

The next morning the ten preachers met in conference, with Wesley at their head. Insignificant as to numbers, but mighty in faith and works, these good men organized *the first Wesleyan Conference*. They did not meet for the purpose of creating a new ecclesiastical structure; for, with obvious sincerity, they disavowed any such purpose; nor did they meet to parcel out "fat livings" among themselves, for their Methodistic work lay chiefly among the poor; neither were they ambitious of great reputations, for they were reviled on every side by the men who gave tone to public opinion. They "desired nothing but to save their own souls and those that heard them." This desire was the key-note of their discussions. Never, perhaps, since the meeting of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, had there been a gathering of men more disinterested, more pure in

motive and aim, more terribly earnest, than these ten devoted servants of the Lord Jesus.

Besides Wesley, of *clergymen* there were his brother Charles, the poet of Methodism, the peer of Watts, and a genuine successor, by virtue of his lyrical genius, of the "sweet singer of Israel;" the bold Henry Piers, Vicar of Bexley, whose faithful rebukes of the sins of the clergy had already exposed him to the censures of his priestly superiors; the brave Samuel Taylor, Vicar of Quinton, grandson of a noble martyr, and the heroic advocate of Methodism in the teeth of savage mobs; the modest John Meriton, from the Isle of Man, the faithful companion of Wesley, and John Hodges, a Welsh rector, and a firm friend of Wesley and his work. The *lay preachers* were Maxfield, Bennet (subsequently Wesley's rival for the hand of Grace Murray), Richards, and John Downes, the only one of the four who "lived and died a Methodist."

These earnest men sat six days, discussing the doctrines, methods, and rules of the Methodist societies, the condition of the Established Church,

the best means of reforming it, and of saving the people of Great Britain. They were fearful of schism, and very resolute of purpose not to allow their movement to grow into a separate Church! Little did they imagine that God's purpose concerning their work infinitely transcended their conceptions of it, and that they were laying the foundation-stone of a spiritual fabric which, in a century and a quarter, would be the greatest and grandest Protestant institution on the face of the earth. Yet such, in fact, was the work they did. From that conference of ten mostly unknown men have grown those systems of Methodist conferences which now girdle the globe, and direct the labors of thousands upon thousands of ministers, who are constantly traveling and preaching the Gospel to almost every nation under heaven. Thus, while these good and true men honored God, by aiming at the highest good for its own sake, God honored them by making their work fruitful beyond all expectation and precedent.

Every step in Wesley's remarkable career was evidently directed by the providence of his beloved

Lord. The ancient Israelites were not more really led by Moses from Egypt to Palestine, than was Wesley, by the invisible hand of God, into the lengths and breadths of England's territory. We have seen how the almost unlettered John Nelson and the cultivated Lady Huntingdon were unconsciously joined in calling him to the North. We will now inquire how his Master led his willing feet to carry the "good tidings of great joy" to the beautiful vales and barren moors of the West.

Among his Bristol converts was a Captain Turner, who, for purposes of business or pleasure, visited St. Ives, in Cornwall. Here, to his great surprise and gratification, he found a matron, named Catherine Quick, and eleven others, in the habit of meeting together for prayer. The Bristol Methodist spoke enthusiastically of Wesley and of Methodism to this godly little group. They caught some of the good man's fire, and immediately invited Wesley to Cornwall. Such was the little door through which our founder entered the West of England, and began that

mighty work among its rude miners and villagers which transformed them, by thousands, from brutal sinners into active, happy saints.

It was high time for the appearance of extraordinary messengers among the miners and peasantry of the West. They were literally wallowing in the mire of brutality, and groping their way in the thickest darkness of ignorance. Among them were many notorious smugglers and cruel robber wreckers. Their chosen sports were cock-fighting, bull-baiting, and wrestling. They were also slaves of the ale-barrel and gin-bottle. Vice was the rule, virtue the rare exception. Their marvelous ignorance may be illustrated by an incident which, if not well authenticated, might very naturally be thought apocryphal. It occurred in a village five miles from Helstone, in Cornwall, which was literally without a copy of the Bible, or other religious work, except a copy of the "Book of Common Prayer," which was kept at the tavern.

It happened, one day, that a fearful storm swept over the village. The people were terrified, thinking the world was coming to a speedy end. In

their fright, they fled to the tavern, crying to Tom, the bar-tender :

“Read us a prayer, Tom ; read us a prayer !”

With this request, they dropped on their knees. Tom snatched up a book, and began to read about storms and wrecks. Very soon his mistress, discovering that he was reading the wrong book, cried out :

“Tom, that is Robinson Crusoe !”

“No,” replied the bar-tender, who was either a low humorist or a very ignorant man ; “no, it is the Prayer-book.”

Again the reading proceeded, until Tom came to a description of the man Friday, when the mistress of the tavern again interrupted him, saying :

“Tom, I am certain you are reading Robinson Crusoe !”

“Well, well, I suppose I am,” replied the tapster, “there are as good prayers in Robinson Crusoe as in any other book.”

So Tom read on, until the storm abated. Then the stupid villagers rose from their knees and went to their homes, congratulating themselves on

having performed a religious duty! It was high time, surely, that some one appeared among such a people, holding the light of heavenly truth in his hand.

Prompt to follow the leadings of his Lord, Wesley sent his brother into Cornwall at once. As might be expected among such a people, he met with a rude reception. The resident clergy railed against him; the rabble assaulted him. He bore their rough treatment with a heroism equal to that of his noble brother, but was soon recalled to London.

Wesley himself went down shortly after, accompanied by the brave-hearted John Nelson and three other helpers of like spirit.

This spiritual foray into Satan's dominion was no idle pastime. Our heroes, like true soldiers, had to endure both hardships and violence. Their lodging, at one time, was in a room without a bed. Wesley and Nelson slept on the floor. Nelson's overcoat served for Wesley's pillow, while Burkitt's "Notes on the New Testament" did that service for Nelson. After using this hard bed for

two weeks, Wesley awoke one morning, at three o'clock, turned over, touched his companion on the side, and jocosely said:

"Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer, for the skin is off but one side yet."

Their board was no better than their lodging. They preached continually, but were seldom asked to eat or drink. They lived partly on berries. While picking some blackberries, one day, Wesley said:

"Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there is plenty of blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting an appetite, but the worst for getting food."

During this visit to Cornwall, the rabble did little more than roar against Wesley; but as his helpers kept preaching, and hundreds were converted, the mob, excited by a Dr. Borlaise, and other gentlemen of property and standing, became more and more violent. Maxwell was seized by the press-gang, Shepherd was arrested as a disturber of the peace, and the converts were frequently subjected to very harsh treatment. During

a subsequent tour, Wesley narrowly escaped a martyr's death.

It was on a pleasant July afternoon, at Falmouth. Wesley had been greatly annoyed during the preceding days, at St. Just's and Gwennap, by warrants for his arrest, which the officers lacked courage to execute. After arriving at Falmouth, he enters a house to visit a lady invalid. Scarcely is he seated, before a countless rabble surround the dwelling, shouting like savages, and roaring with "all their throats." At first the invalid lady strives to quiet their fury. She might as easily still the raging waves of the sea. Disheartened, if not terrified, she soon retires, leaving Wesley and a little serving-maid, named Kitty, to deal with the infuriated mob.

"Bring out the Canorum!" (a Cornish slang-word for Methodist.) "Bring out the Canorum!" they shout, with a voice like the sound of many waters.

Wesley remains silent within. The foremost men then force open the street door, and crowd into the hall, uttering curses and fierce imprecations.

The partition trembles and seems ready to break down. So unmoved by fear for himself is Wesley, that, seeing a large mirror, on the inside of the partition, in danger of falling, he mounts a chair, takes down the glass, and removes it to a place of safety. The poor girl who is in the room becomes terror-stricken, and exclaims:

“O, sir, what must we do?”

“We must pray,” replies Wesley, beginning to feel, but not to fear, that his hour was really come.

“But sir,” pleads the brave girl, “is it not best for you to hide yourself? to get into the closet?”

“No, it is best for me to stand just where I am,” he rejoins.

Just then a body of rough sailors, belonging to some privateers lying in the harbor, become enraged at the slowness of the proceedings. They make a rush toward the hall, force back the parties in possession, set their shoulders against the inside door, and shout:

“Avast, lads, avast!”

The hinges give way. The door falls into the

room. Then our fearless Wesley steps forward, bare-headed, and calmly says :

“Here I am. Which of you has any thing to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? or you? or you?”

The rioters are awed by his voice and the air of authority with which he speaks. Hands raised to strike are arrested as by an invisible force. The people fall back. He advances as they retire, step by step, until he stands in the middle of the street. Then he appeals to them, saying:

“Neighbors, countrymen! Do you desire to hear me speak?”

The crowd feel that a superior mind, a master spirit, is among them. Their rage subsides, and they shout vehemently :

“Yes, yes, he shall speak—he shall! Nobody shall hinder him.”

Unfortunately, the ground on which his small person stands is too low to give him perfect command of that surging mass of human beings ; but as far as his voice can be heard, they are still and orderly. Very soon the leaders of the mob are no

merely cowed, they are changed into his friends, and, with oaths which grate harshly on the good man's ears, exclaim:

"Not a man shall touch this gentleman!"

At that moment a clergyman, either ashamed of the scene or subdued by the grandeur of Wesley's soul, speaks to the mob, asking:

"Are you not ashamed to use a stranger thus?"

Other gentlemen now step up, and escort our undaunted founder through the street, and into a house. Behind this dwelling is the shore of the bay. They put Wesley into a boat, and row him to Penryn. Some of the mob now recover their courage, and follow the boat along the shore, cursing loudly and fiercely, to the landing. Here, any ordinary man would have recoiled. But our great-hearted Wesley, not knowing fear, leaps from the boat, and nimbly ascends the steep, narrow passage to the landing above. The foremost man of the mob glares on him with the fire of hellish passion in his eyes. Wesley shrinks not, but advancing, and looking into the fellow's evil face. **says :**

“I wish you a good-night.”

The man stands spell-bound, until Wesley mounts his horse, which has been sent round to meet him. But no sooner is he relieved from the power of Wesley's eye than his vile passion resumes its sway, and he growls between his teeth:

“I wish you was in hell!”

This bad wish falls harmlessly on Wesley's ears, as he rides joyfully along through the still evening air to his next appointment.

This exciting incident not only illustrates the heroic courage of our noble Wesley, but it also shows the power which his personal presence exercised over men. They quailed before the glance of his eyes. Why? Not because his physical aspect was commanding—for, as you know, he was a small man, delicately formed—but because he had a great soul, which rose on every trying occasion, under the inspiration of a mighty faith in God, into a grandeur almost supernatural. With such a leader, is it surprising that the first Methodist preachers stood up like heroes, and bore the brunt of those bitter hostilities which almost every

where rose up to oppose the spread of the great Wesleyan revival?

But, notwithstanding all the violence of the mob, and the enmity of formalist ministers and Church officers, the work of God increased wonderfully in Cornwall, as elsewhere. Thousands who came to mock, remained to pray. Societies were organized, churches built, congregations gathered. The mines of Cornwall, instead of ringing with the blasphemies of brutal workmen, soon echoed the happy voices of souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, singing the sweet hymns of Wesley's immortal brother.





Chapter XII.

IN THE EMERALD ISLE AND ON SCOTIA'S HILLS.

IRELAND, unrivaled in natural beauty, but long cursed with moral desolation by the policy of Papist teachers, was first visited by Wesley in 1747. Thither, as elsewhere, he went in response to a Macedonian cry.

His pioneer in this part of his work was one of his helpers, named Thomas Williams, "a man of attractive appearance, pleasing manners, and good address." Crossing the Channel, this enterprising evangelist found a society of Moravians in Dublin, which had been raised up by John Cennick—a good but fickle-minded man—who, having first forsaken Wesley for Whitefield, had finally joined the Moravians. Some of Cennick's followers flocked to hear Williams, as did many

others in Dublin. A society was formed. Souls were converted. The work soon looked so promising, that Williams wrote for Wesley to come and give it supervision.

Wesley responded with alacrity, found nearly three hundred members in society, and a congregation of over four hundred people worshipping in a church formerly owned by the Lutherans. He was delighted with his reception, preached twice a day to crowds of rich and poor, for a fortnight. He then recrossed the Channel, and sent his brother to extend the work.

When Charles Wesley reached Dublin, he found that the sunny welcome given to his brother had been succeeded by a storm of mob violence. The church had been stripped of its benches and pulpit, which had been burned in the street. Papist Irishmen had beaten the members of the young society with shillalahs, and nicknamed them "Swaddlers."

This term of reproach originated from a remark made by John Cennick, who, while denouncing Popish idolatry, had said :

"I curse and blaspheme all the gods in heaven, but the Babe that lay in Mary's lap, the Babe that lay in swaddling clouts."

Because of this by no means graceful speech, the Catholics called Cennick "Swaddling John," and the Methodists "Swaddlers."

But neither vulgar nicknames nor popular violence could prevent Charles Wesley from proclaiming Jesus. Driven from the church, he preached, at the peril of his life, on Oxmanton Green, until he could purchase a suitable building. This was found in a few weeks. It had been a weaver's shop, and was now fitted up for a preaching-room, with rooms over it for the preacher's home. Here Methodism intrenched itself too strongly to be driven out.

After a few months' service in Dublin and other places, Charles returned to England, and John revisited the "Green Isle," preaching extensively and with pre-eminent success, though not without bitter opposition, in many places.

At Cork, young Methodism, though quietly born, was speedily baptized with blood. The

clergy, jealous of its sudden popularity, secretly stirred up the civic officers, and they openly sustained a notorious ballad-singer, named Butler, in getting up a mob. This vulgar scoundrel dressed himself in clerical gown and bands, carried a Bible in one hand and a bundle of ribald ballads in the other, and paraded the streets, singing villainous lies about the Methodists, in doggerel rhymes. The ignorant Catholics listened to his songs, became inflamed with passion, and soon gathered into a furious mob. They followed him to the meeting-house, and pelted the people with mire and stones. Growing bolder with impunity, they beat the unoffending Methodists with clubs, and cut them with swords. They next attacked them in their homes, smashing their windows and spoiling their goods. This savage work was carried on almost daily, for weeks and months. One day, Wesley rode into the city. The people rose, crowded the streets, and rushed to their doors and windows, in countless multitudes. Judging it prudent not to stop, our brave itinerant rode steadily on, and through the city, unharmed. Had

he paused to preach, it is more than probable that the scowling mob would have torn him to pieces. He wisely chose to bide his opportunity.

In vain did his persecuted followers appeal to the mayor and magistrates for protection. The rioters grew more and more fierce. They destroyed every movable thing within the chapel. They cut and gashed the persons of both men and women, and drove numbers of them out of the city. Finally, they prosecuted several of the preachers as vagabonds, at the Spring term of the court.

These humble heroes of the cross were arrested and placed in the criminal's dock, like common thieves. The mountebank Butler was the first witness called. The judge appears to have been a real gentleman. Fixing his keen eye on the ballad-monger, he asked, sternly:

"What is your calling, sirrah?"

"I sing ballads, my lord," replied the cowed wretch, in a sheepish tone.

The astonished judge raised his hands, and exclaimed:

"Here are six gentlemen indicted as vagabonds, and the first accuser is a vagabond by profession! Bring on your next witness."

Another low fellow then took the stand. The judge asked him, also:

"What is your calling, sirrah?"

With an impudent leer and tone, the man replied:

"I am an anti-swaddler, my lord."

"Take that fellow out of court!" cried the insulted judge to the sheriff.

He was promptly obeyed; and then, after giving the corporation and others concerned a scorching reprimand for permitting the disgraceful riots, so long headed by Butler, he discharged the heroic itinerants.

Butler was effectually squelched by this merited rebuff, and left Cork in disgrace. But he did not change his habits. Going to Waterford, he lost his arm in a riot, and fled to Dublin, where he was actually saved from starving by the alms of the Dublin Methodists. How beautiful is Christian charity!

But the mob-spirit in Cork, though checked, was not dead. When Wesley showed himself there again, as he did shortly after Butler's disgrace, the rabble surrounded the preaching-house as soon as the service began. The mayor, under the pretense of keeping the peace, had ordered out some soldiers and drummers. The latter, to the gratification of the mob, kept up a loud drumming. But Wesley would not be drummed down. He finished his sermon in spite of the noise, and then boldly walked out into the street.

His appearance was the signal for a one-sided battle. Missiles of all sorts flew from every quarter, and fell all around ; but nothing struck him. Seeing a sergeant near him, he said, authoritatively :

"Sergeant, I desire you to keep the king's peace."

"I have no orders to do that, sir," replied the soldier, respectfully, but showing by his answer that the mayor did not wish to protect Wesley or his followers.

Our noble founder then walked boldly into the

midst of the surging mob, looking firmly into the eye of every man before him. Overawed by his manner, the cowardly wretches fell back as he advanced. When he reached a bridge, which he must needs cross, he found it crowded with a grim rabble, one of whom shouted :

“Now, hey, for the Romans !”

But Wesley did not hesitate an instant. On he went, one against hundreds. Stepping upon the bridge, he saw the mob quail once more beneath the imperial glance of his unshrinking eye, and he walked through the parting mass of human beings, like a conqueror, to his friend's house beyond. There a stout Romanist had taken possession of the doorway, to prevent his entrance. The moment Wesley paused before this rude fellow, one of the mob hurled a stone at his head. It missed its aim, but knocked down his adversary, and he entered the house over his prostrate body.

The Cork riots continued a while longer, and Wesley was burned in effigy. But they were finally worn out by the patient spirit of that glorious young Methodism which, having “endured all

things" short of actual martyrdom, finally made itself a mighty religious power in that uproarious city. The rock had resisted and overcome the waves.

Wesley spent much time and sent numerous helpers into Ireland. He seems to have had a strong faith in the fruitfulness of his Irish work. When expostulated with by the English societies for doing so much for the Green Isle, he said :

"Have patience, and Ireland will repay you!"

This reply was prophetic. Irish Methodism, though it has not yet cleansed the Emerald Isle of the corruptions of Romanism, has saved thousands, and given to English and American Methodism some of its noblest historic names.

Wesley's first visit to Scotland was in 1751, at the request of a brave, pious, and accomplished soldier, named Captain Gallatin, who profoundly admired our great revivalist. The Scotch, unlike their Irish cousins, received him with respectful courtesy. They had fought too many battles for religious freedom even to think of a resort to mob violence against a preacher of righteousness, how-

ever they might differ from him in opinion and dispute his doctrines. Hence it was that, on this and on subsequent visits to Scotland, Wesley was listened to with marked attention by all classes, from the humblest clansman to the proudest chief. Among those benefited by his labors was Lady Frances Gardiner, widow of the chivalric Colonel Gardiner; Lady Maxwell, and Lady Glenorchy—noble and elect ladies, whose labors of love gave ample illustration of the heavenly quality of the genuine Methodistic spirit.

Wesley sent his preachers into Scotland, and they formed societies in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and other cities. But for reasons growing partly out of the deep-rooted prejudices of the Scotch, and partly, perhaps, out of well-meant but ill-advised attempts on the part of the preachers to modify the system to meet those prejudices, Methodism never gained so deep a hold nor attained so wide a success in Scotland as it did in England. Still it has been a blessing to thousands upon thousands in whose veins flowed that grand old Covenanters' blood which their sturdy

ancestors poured out on many a gory field in defense of the truth.

The kind of work done in Scotland by Methodism is well illustrated by the following typical incident :

Poor old Janet met her former pastor, one day, as she was hobbling through a street in Glasgow. She courtesied respectfully. He shook her hand, and said :

"O, Janet, where have you been, woman? I have na' seen ye at the kirk for long."

"I go among the 'Methodists,'" replied Janet, smiling as with pleasant recollections.

"Among the Methodists! Why, what gude get ye there, woman?"

"Glory to God!" rejoins Janet, with deep feeling and kindling eyes, "I do get gude; for God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven me a' my sins."

The minister shook his head, like one in doubt, and said :

"Ah, Janet, be not high-minded, but fear; the devil is a cunning adversary."

"I dinna' care a button for the deevil,"

answered Janet, with spirit. "I've gotten him under my feet. I ken the deevil can do muckle deal, but there is ane thing he canna' do."

"What is that, Janet?" asks the puzzled minister.

"He canna' shed abroad the love of God in my heart, and I am sure I have got it there," was Janet's triumphant but devout reply.

"Weel, weel," rejoined the minister, smiling good-naturedly, "if ye have got it there, Janet, hold it fast, and never let it go."

This was good advice. Janet acted upon it, and kept her faith until she entered the "Beautiful City." May the reader live and die in the same precious faith!





Chapter XIII.

GRACE MURRAY AND MRS. VAZEILLE.

WHEN Wesley was forty years old, he wrote a tract commending a single life as more conducive to piety and usefulness than a married one. This was one of our great man's mistakes. It probably grew partly out of his early ascetic notions, partly out of his keen perception of the difficulty of harmonizing the duties of an itinerant career, such as it then was, with the claims of domestic life. Possibly, his wounded affections, in the case of Miss Hopkey, at Savannah, may have unconsciously influenced his opinion. Be this as it may, at the Conference of 1748, a discussion of the doctrine of the tract, originating with his brother Charles, then contemplating marriage, convinced him "that a

believer might marry without suffering loss in his soul." The only remarkable thing about this conclusion is, that such a clear headed man could have ever thought otherwise. For, if marriage be an institution of God, how can he who conforms to it be, for that reason, less acceptable or less holy in the sight of him who ordained it? It is not the right use, but the abuse, of the marriage relation, which mars the beauty and dims the vision of the soul.

The year following this discussion, Charles Wesley, after much serious thought, consultation with friends, and prayer, was married to Miss Sarah Gwynne. This young lady was the accomplished daughter of a Welsh gentleman of fortune and position. Wesley performed the ceremony, and the bridegroom says of the bridal party:

"We were cheerful, without mirth; serious, without sadness; and my brother seemed the happiest person among us."

The bride made a great sacrifice of external comforts when she exchanged her father's mansion for the meagre appointments of the preachers'

houses at Bristol and London. Nevertheless, it was a happy marriage, because it sprang from love, and the bride and her husband were intellectually and spiritually fitted for each other. It must be conceded, however, that it contributed, with other causes, to the limitation of the husband's evangelistic sphere. The innocent delights of a refined family circle gradually charmed the poet of Methodism, until he lost his relish for the excitements, dangers, and pleasures of those long preaching tours in which he formerly delighted. His journeys grew shorter by degrees, and became less frequent, until his labors were mainly restricted to Bristol and London. Nevertheless, our great lyrical poet remained true to his Master, and, in most things, to his more persistent brother and to Methodism, down to the end of his days.

Having honestly changed his opinion, Wesley, shortly after, resolved to change his state, and to become a married man. His right to form this purpose, no one may dispute. Of its prudence he was the most competent judge.

The lady to whom he offered his hand was

named Grace Murray. Her maiden name was Norman. She had been serious when a child, gay when a girl, a servant in London when eighteen years old, and, though her education had been quite limited, was a very attractive and talented woman.

In London, she won the affections of a Scotch sailor, named Murray, of highly respectable connections, and became his wife. The death of her first-born child was followed by seriousness, by attendance on Whitefield's and Wesley's ministry, and by her conversion. Her husband, on returning from sea, was exasperated to find that she had become a Methodist, and angrily—yes, furiously—told her she should not go to hear the Methodists again. But, with true Christian, Methodistic gentleness and grit, she replied :

"I can not yield to you in this, my dear. If I should, I should lose my soul."

"Well," said the angry sailor, with a fierce manner and many curses, "you shall leave the Methodists or me."

This was bringing things to a serious issue ;

but, with true Christ-like heroism, she gently rejoined:

“I love you above any one else on earth; but I will leave you, and all that I have on earth, sooner than I will leave Christ.”

He then threatened to put her into a mad-house, but she nobly responded:

“I am ready to go not only to prison, but to death.”

He next swore that he would leave her and “go as far as ships can sail,” but she firmly maintained her ground, saying meekly, but without flinching:

“I can not help it. I could lay down my life for you, but I can not destroy my soul.”

These were grand words, and the heroic woman meant them. They had a glorious effect. The sailor softened down by degrees, and, after some time, entered with her into the fellowship of Jesus. Woman’s firmness, mellowed by woman’s love, conquered the irate sailor and prepared him to submit to her Master. It was well for him that he did so; for, a year or two later, he was drowned at sea.

At twenty-six, Grace "returned to her mother's at Newcastle, a young, fascinating widow." Here she became the leader of several classes, and a visitor of the neighboring societies, speaking to and praying with the people. Wesley, appreciating her remarkable ability, desired her to enter his Orphan-house at Newcastle, as a sort of nurse and matron to such sick preachers, from the surrounding circuits, as might need her care. Yielding to his wishes, she soon devoted herself entirely to the service of the Church, now visiting the societies and then nursing the sick, as occasion required.

Among the preachers whom she nursed was John Bennet, in 1747, and, in 1749, Wesley himself. At the close of his six-days' illness, Wesley, not knowing that she had long been corresponding with Bennet, proposed marriage to his astonished nurse. She promptly accepted him, saying:

"This is too great a blessing for me. I can't tell how to believe it. This is all I could have wished for under heaven."

A week or ten days later, the great reformer,

being about to start on a long spiritual campaign, said to Grace :

“I am fully convinced that God intended you to be my wife ; and though we must part at present, I hope when we again meet, we shall part no more.”

Upon this, the demonstrative widow “begged they might not separate so soon, saying that it was more than she could bear.” Pleased with her seeming devotion, Wesley imprudently took her with him, and, as he says, “she was unspeakably useful both to him and to the societies.”

In Derbyshire they met with John Bennet, whom she had formerly nursed at Newcastle for twenty-six weeks. Here Grace found that she “could bear” to part with her unsuspecting lover ; and here she chose to pause, leaving him to proceed on his tour alone. Scarcely had Wesley left, however, when he received one letter from Bennet, asking his permission to marry Grace, and another from the widow herself, “declaring that she believed it was the will of God that she should” become Bennet’s wife !

Wesley was "utterly amazed." Supposing they were already married, this great man, in whom the meekness of Moses was blended with the patience of Job, instead of yielding to a virtuous indignation, simply "wrote a mild letter to both." What singular forbearance!

Here we can not but regret that our Wesley did not treat Grace as an unprincipled coquette, and indignantly refuse all further communication with her. That he did not, was owing partly to his great and sincere affection for the woman, and partly to that marvelous spirit of forgiveness which led him, habitually, to overlook the faults of his friends. Wesley's great heart never resented personal injuries. It could and did suffer, but it never moved him to give back blow for blow, except in defense of the truth.

Hence it came to pass that, after further correspondence, he unwisely, weakly perhaps, consented to the renewal of their engagement. She then accompanied him to Ireland, acting as "his servant, friend, and fellow-laborer in the Gospel." In Dublin, they agreed to marry, in presence of wit-

nesses. On their return to England, with strange insincerity she renewed her old correspondence with Bennet. Months now passed, during which she coquetted between the two, professing the most devoted love, now to one, and then to the other, frequently repeating and retracting her promise of marriage to both. Evidently, she was a most unmitigated flirt.

Meanwhile, the affair began to agitate the societies. The people, wiser, in this thing at least, than their great leader, saw that Grace was not a suitable woman to be Wesley's wife, and they spoke strongly against the marriage. Finally, Charles Wesley interfered, with a strong protest. He urged the meanness of her origin and her general unfitness. But love had made his naturally aristocratic brother quite democratic, and he replied, that he did not intend to marry Grace "for her birth, but for her qualifications," which, he said, were eminent and proper, as, no doubt, he sincerely believed them to be.

Finding his brother was not to be moved, Charles hastened to meet Grace. He took her

to Newcastle, where John Bennet met them. Grace, with singular inconsistency, at once confessed to Bennet that she had ill-used him, and begged him to forgive her. They were reconciled, and married within a week, Charles remaining at Newcastle until the knot was tied.

Whitefield, hearing of the marriage, sent for Wesley to visit him at Leeds. He went with a very deeply wounded heart, and Whitefield comforted him by his earnest prayers and sympathetic tears. The next day Charles made his appearance, bringing the bride and bridegroom with him. Charles, whose indignation against his brother was still at the boiling point, impetuously exclaimed, on entering the room where Wesley was :

“I renounce all intercourse with you, but what I would have with a heathen man or a publican.”

This foolish and unbrotherly speech brought a flood of tears from the eyes of the susceptible Whitefield and the sympathetic John Nelson, who were both present. They prayed, wept, and entreated, until Charles cooled down, and then the two noble brothers, unable to speak, fell on each

other's neck and wept in the silent sympathy of renewed fraternal love.

Presently John Bennet was introduced. One would naturally suppose that the much injured Wesley would have received his successful rival with coolness, if not with stern words; but, instead of treating him harshly, he—kissed him. What was this unparalleled nobleness but the fruit of heavenly love ruling in a great soul?

He met the false bride also; but we know not the particulars of their interview. "You never saw such a scene," he wrote to a friend; and this is all we know about it. It was thirty-nine years before they met again, and then for a few minutes only. After that, he was never known to mention even her name.

As for Grace, she followed her husband in his abandonment of Wesley and his work, into a profession of ultra Calvinism. Bennet became pastor of a Calvinist Church, and lived ten years after his marriage, when Grace found herself a widow again, with five sons. Subsequently, she lived a retired life, rejoined the Methodists after

several years, and became a very exemplary Christian matron in her old age. When eighty-seven, she died, exclaiming:

“Glory be to thee, my God; peace thou givest!”

How shall we account for Grace Murray's shameful treatment of Mr. Wesley? After carefully reading all the available facts, the writer concludes that her coquetry resulted from a conflict between her ambition and her love. Her heart was with Bennet before Wesley proposed to her. She ought to have told him so, and there the matter would have ended; for Wesley was too high-minded to contend for the hand of any woman whose heart was in another man's keeping. But, dazzled with the prospect of becoming the wife of so celebrated a man, she concealed her prior attachment and correspondence, and pledged him her already engaged hand. But when Bennet appeared, her heart triumphed over her ambition. When he was absent and Wesley present, her ambition dominated over love. And thus the disgraceful contest went on, until it was ended

by her hurried marriage with Bennet, through the interposition of Charles Wesley. Her unpardonable coquetry is an indelible spot upon her otherwise fair fame, and should teach both maidens and widows to act honorably with their suitors.

Wesley was wounded to the quick by this woman's ill-treatment. But, after giving utterance to his griefs in prayer and in poetry, he again girded his soul for work. Plunging with all his might into the thick of God's battle, his heart soon found the healing streams of Divine consolation, and he went on his way rejoicing.

Wesley, having made up his mind to marry, did not permit the shameful coquetry of Grace Murray to turn him from his purpose. Hence, about fifteen months after she gave her hand to John Bennet, we find our great founder proposing marriage to a merchant's widow, named Vazeille.

This lady resided in London. Though once a domestic servant, she had gained highly respectable connections by her marriage with her late husband. She was the possessor of \$50,000—a

goodly fortune in those times—which sum was securely settled on herself and four children. She was seven years younger than Wesley.

Her person was very attractive, her manner uncommonly agreeable. Her conversational powers were superior, and she could adapt herself readily to rich and poor; especially when speaking to them of personal religion. She seemed like a person of extraordinary piety, but of a “sorrowful spirit”—pensive, as was becoming in a widow.

Such was the Widow Vazeille, *outwardly*. It is not, therefore, surprising that Wesley judged her a suitable person to become his wife. His insight into character, especially female character, was not equal to his other endowments. Possibly, his own habitual sincerity rendered him incapable of suspecting insincerity in others. Scorning to wear a mask himself, he rarely thought of looking for one on the faces of his friends, and was, consequently, often deceived. At any rate, he estimated the fair widow at her *seeming* value, and resolved to make her his wife.

His brother, with a keener perception of her

real character, protested strongly, angrily even, but vainly. Wesley had made up his mind, and nothing could turn him. As usual, where his convictions of personal duty were concerned, his will was iron.

The circumstances of this unfortunate marriage were both curious and characteristic. So seemingly trivial a thing as a fall on the ice had much to do with it. It is late in January, 1751, and he is about to depart on his long annual tour to the North, when, on the morning of the day preceding the one fixed for his departure, he slips on the ice, while crossing London Bridge, and sprains a leg and an ankle, badly. A surgeon binds up the injured limb, and, though suffering severe pain, Wesley resolutely limps to his appointment, and preaches. At night he attempts to preach again, at the Foundry, but the anguish of his limb proves stronger than his will, imperial though it be, and he is compelled to yield the pulpit to another. Then, as if impelled by a cruel fate to rush on his evil destiny, he orders himself to be removed to the widow's mansion, on Threadneedle Street.

The ambitious woman receives him affectionately, no doubt, and nurses him kindly, throwing all the witchery of her charms around him, for the next seven days. But neither love nor pain can keep him from his life-work. He spends the time, as he tells us, "partly in prayer, reading, and *conversation*, and partly in writing a 'Hebrew Grammar and Lessons for Children.'"

Good and useful employments, these, for our lame reformer,—all but the *conversation*. That even this was grave and becoming there can be no doubt, for this good man never trifled. He did, unquestionably, speak of their marriage with characteristic seriousness, faithfully pointing out the domestic sacrifices she would have to make in accepting his hand. She, on her part, promises not to hinder him one jot, but to help him in his great work. The result is, that, on the Monday or Tuesday following, we see him, though "still unable to set his foot to the ground," kneeling at the hymeneal altar with his hostess.

The crippled bridegroom remains at home with his bride a fortnight, and then, "still unable to walk,"

he leaves her, and rides to Bristol. Here he holds a conference, which, though sad at the beginning, winds up with much rejoicing in God "for the consolation."

Instead of "finding a favor from the Lord" in the woman he had made his wife, as he had but too fondly hoped, Wesley speedily found that he had taken a very bitter cup to his lips. She was utterly incapable of appreciating either his great character or the grandeur of his work. Accustomed to rule her first husband, she was soon irritated at finding herself joined to a man with a self-regulated will—a man to whom the obligations of duty were of infinitely higher importance than the caprices of a wife. Having been long accustomed to the comforts, and some of the elegancies, of domestic life, she speedily rebelled against those inconveniences and hardships of travel which her new husband suffered almost every-where, and looked upon as trifles. Finding him proof against her most bewitching endeavors to charm him into some abridgment of his extensive journeys, she became jealous of the grand

work to which he was devoted; foolishly—ay, wickedly—regarding it as her rival. For a very short time only, she held these bad feelings somewhat under control; and then, giving them the reins, permitted them to display her true character to her astonished and tortured husband.

She fretted and fumed over the inelegancies and discomforts of their places of entertainment when traveling; she spoke biting and twitting words to her ever-busy but patient companion. Finding that he carried on religious correspondence with the more pious and active ladies of his societies, she admitted the demon of unwomanly jealousy into her vulgar soul. This made her furious and unendurable. She became her husband's enemy, watching over him for evil, taunting him, searching his pockets, opening his letters, stealing his papers, robbing him of his money, forging some letters, interpolating others, and publishing them for the gratification of his enemies. Sometimes she dogged his steps, riding many miles to observe who was with him in his carriage when he entered a town. She even proceeded, at times, to employ

personal violence against him. John Hampson, Sr., in his "Life of Wesley," asserts that he once entered a room, and saw Mrs. Wesley "foaming with fury." Wesley himself "was on the floor, where she had been trailing him by the hair of his head; and she herself was still holding in her hand the venerable locks which she had plucked up by the roots!"*

Do you wonder that Hampson, who was almost a giant in size and strength, in speaking of this sad scene to his son, said, with more of human feeling than of courtly, or even Christian, elegance:

"Jack, I felt as though I could have knocked the soul out of her!"

Southey, the poet laureate, writing of this bad woman, truly says:

"Fain would she have made him, like Mark Antony, give up all for love; and, being disappointed in that hope, she tormented him in such a manner, by her outrageous jealousy, that she deserves to be *classed*, in a triad with Xanthippe and the wife of Job, as one of the three bad wives."

*Quoted from Tyerman's "Wesley."

Job was not more patient than Wesley. The painful picture drawn by the pen of Hampson might lead one to suppose that he had a craven spirit, did we not know that the soul dwelling in that prostrate form had often proved itself to be of heroic mold. Depend upon it, the man who could face furious mobs without trembling, did not submit to a virago's blows because he was craven. But he was too chivalrous as a man, and too meek as a Christian, to return a woman's violence with violence. Few men would have endured quietly what he suffered. That he bore his conjugal wrongs patiently, for the sake of the cause which was dearer to him than life, we have no doubt. How great a scandal would have fallen upon it, could the Fury, who was his wife, have reported that he had struck her? One almost regrets that the ties of public duty bound his hands. Yet who can refuse to honor him for not breaking those bonds?

It was thus that he presented his meekness as a rock over which the waves of her unbridled passions might break, but which they could not sweep away. He suffered in silence almost, seldom

speaking of his wrongs, except to his most intimate correspondents. Occasionally his "sinking spirits" sought relief in writing to a pious matron about his wife's misconduct—a mistake on his part which we can not defend, though, in view of the transparent purity and simplicity of his character, we can not find it in our heart to censure it very severely.

One act of his attention to his insufferable wife affords a beautiful illustration of his forgiving spirit. It occurred seventeen years after their marriage. Wesley had been traveling and preaching four months. His journey ends at Bristol, on the midnight of Saturday. Scarcely is he out of his carriage when he is told that Mrs. Wesley is dangerously sick, in London.

What will he do? In forty-eight hours he has to meet his preachers in conference. London is one hundred and fourteen miles distant. The roads are bad. He needs rest, for he is now an old man of sixty-five. The sick woman has been the scourge of his life. Will he go to see her?

Ay, that he will ; for she is his wife, and he can

forgive the wrongs she has done him. Horses are ordered at once. He rides all the rest of that night, nearly all the next day, and, shortly after the midnight of Sunday, stands by her bedside. She has passed the crisis of her fever, and is better. He spends an hour in prayer and sympathy, then re-enters his carriage, drives hard all day, and is in Bristol again on Monday evening ready to meet his conference on the following Tuesday morning. Surely, the man who could act thus toward such a woman, carried a noble, magnanimous, loving heart in his bosom! A wife capable of estimating his character would have idolized him.

But no kindness that Wesley could offer was able to transform that virago into the good wife of so great and busy a man. Hence, after quitting him several times and returning again, she finally, in one of her insane freaks, "set out for Newcastle, proposing never to return."

Wesley offered no objection. He only records the fact, and adds :

"I did not forsake her ; I did not dismiss her ; I will not recall her."

They never met again. Ten years later, she died in London, October 8, 1781, while he was in the West of England. She bequeathed her property to her son. To Wesley she left a gold ring.

Our Wesley's marriage cost him thirty years of sore and bitter trial. Some have censured him for marrying at all; others charge him with hastiness in choosing a wife. We can not concur with the former critics, because we believe the Divine declaration—it is not good for man to be alone—was as applicable to him as to any other man. As to his hastiness, it is difficult to see how he could have mended the matter by delay. His itinerating habits rendered it impossible that he could see much of Mrs. Vazeille—or any other lady, indeed—before marrying her. Had he seen her for a year longer, during his transient visits to London, she would have continued, in appearance, the same attractive, pensive, pious woman, in his eyes, that she did during his previous acquaintance with her. It was not his hastiness, so much as his lack of power to read female character, which led him into the wrong matrimonial

net. This was one of his few weaknesses, as was apparent in his previous courtships, as well as in this unfortunate marriage. To this weakness we must attribute the grand mistake of his life.

Yet even this blunder, like the shadow in a picture, serves to bring out the grandeur of his character into bolder relief. Terrible, consuming, and long continued as his matrimonial trials were, they did not abate either the number or efficiency of his labors a single jot. Under burdens which would have borne most men to the earth, or turned them aside from their chosen pursuit, he stood erect, strong, undismayed, and persistent to the end. A happy marriage, perchance, might have seduced him into some diminution of his toils. To that delightful but dangerous test he was never subjected. But he did pass triumphantly through the fires of an uncommonly wretched marriage, coming out of the dread ordeal without so much as the smell of fire on his garments. As from Samson's slain lion there came forth honey, so out of our Wesley's misjudgment of woman's character there came forth surpassing strength.



Chapter XIV.

WESLEY'S LAY AND CLERICAL HELPERS.

THE rapid spread of Methodism throughout Great Britain must ever stand among the greatest marvels of human history. Had all, or most, who contributed to it as preachers, been scholarly, eloquent, and great men, like the Wesleys and their early coadjutor, Whitefield, it would still have remained a wonder. But when it is considered that, excepting these and a few clerical sympathizers, who gave it countenance and occasional local help, its first preachers were plain unlettered men, taken from the working classes, its marvelousness becomes so stupendous that we can only stand before the mighty fact in amazement and exclaim, "It was God's work!" Such a work by such instruments, unaided of

Heaven, was as impossible as it would have been for the stern prophet on old Carmel's summit to bring fire upon his offering without Divine intervention. The might of God working through the weakness of man, was the source of Methodistic power.

You must not suppose, however, that Wesley's helpers were either fools, idlers, or feeble-minded men. On the contrary, they were men of good natural endowments, whose hands had been early taught to labor, to the neglect, partial at least, of their brains. They were diamonds in the rough, precious stones uncut and unpolished, until their hearts were visited by the grace of God. The love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts, quickened their intellects into energetic life. Feeding daily on the strong mental meat of Holy Scripture, their understandings, as well as their hearts, grew rapidly, and, Wesley himself being judge, they speedily acquired power to state and defend the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel with a force and clearness that few "candidates for holy orders" could equal. Added to this, they carried

into their work a willingness to suffer, a patience, a zeal, and a courage, which may have been equaled, but was never excelled, by any class of religious laborers in any age. Had the fires of blood-stained Smithfield been still burning, there can be no doubt that those self-denying men would have cheerfully followed their noble leader into the flames, and sealed their testimony with their blood. Let us glance at some of them, through a few representative facts, and learn of what precious stuff their souls were made.

One day the saintly Countess of Huntingdon sits listening to a modest young man, who is expounding the Word of God to an attentive congregation. Knowing him to be an unlettered person, her ladyship is nervous, fearing lest he should mangle instead of explaining the blessed Word. But the young man proceeds quietly and skillfully with his work. Very soon a telling remark seizes her attention. She begins to lose sight of the speaker, and to think of his subject only. As he goes on, clearing away difficulties, bringing out old truths in new lights, brushing

aside false interpretations, and pouring over his words a gushing tide of tender feeling, her features become fixed, almost rigid, and she sits as if "made of wood or stone," so overwhelmed is she with astonishment.

That speaker was Thomas Maxfield. He was one of the first, if not the first, of that brave army of uneducated lay preachers, with which Wesley made his victorious assaults on the kingdom of evil in Old England. If not learned in theology, he was "mighty in the Scriptures." If not ordained by men, he demonstrated his Divine call to preach, by his success in winning souls to Christ. Like his beloved leader, he had a hero's spirit, which enabled him to face savage mobs without flinching, and to endure persecution without complaint. He labored twenty years with Wesley, and then, tempted probably by his popularity and by certain enthusiastic notions which he foolishly embraced, he left him, and became pastor of an independent congregation in London. He finally died in peace.

At Nottingham, one day, an uproarious mob

gathers round the meeting-house, threatening to tear it from its foundation. The preacher, a plain, hard-handed, earnest man, is seized by the constable, carried before a magistrate, and charged with creating the riot! After ascertaining the name of the accused, the magistrate, evidently puzzled by the situation, says :

"I wonder you can not stay at home. You see the mob won't suffer you to preach in Nottingham."

"Sir," replied the undaunted preacher, with ready mother-wit, "I was not aware that Nottingham was governed by a mob. Most towns are governed by the magistrates ;" and then he begins "to set life and death" before his judge.

"Do n't preach here !" thunders the astonished magistrate, interrupting the irrepressible preacher.

"How shall I dispose of this man?" asks the constable.

"Take him to your house," replies the magistrate.

The ungodly constable begs to be excused from entertaining such a man, lest his house

should be used as a chapel; and, finally, the magistrate, not knowing what else to do, says:

“Take him back to the place from which you brought him; and see to it that he is not hurt!”

This preacher was honest John Nelson, a mason by trade, who, after finding salvation under Wesley's preaching in London, had gone back to Yorkshire, told the blessed story to his neighbors, and led scores of the worst characters to the cross. Wesley, seeing such Divine credentials of his fitness to preach, made him one of his helpers. The good man entered upon the dangerous work, trudged to his appointments on foot, worked with his trowel by day, to earn his bread, and preached evenings and Sundays. He faced mobs with a daring equal to that of Wesley himself, suffered cruel beatings, was forced for a time into the army, imprisoned, and otherwise maltreated. Unappalled by these terrible trials, and even glorying in them, this heroic man preached on, and thousands of souls found rich blessings through his herculean labors. Surely, the mettle of the noblest manhood was in John Nelson.

When Wesley was fifty-two years old, he was, one day, shaving himself in a room with one of his helpers. Observing that this man was busy whittling the top of a stick, he asked :

“What are you doing, John?”

“I am taking your face, sir. I intend to engrave it on a copper plate.”

Now, this man had never had any instruction in **the** art of engraving. Nevertheless, he proceeded with his whittling, made himself a set of engraver's tools, and produced an excellent portrait of his beloved chief. Wesley says of this fact :

“Such another instance, I suppose, not all England, or perhaps Europe, can produce.”

This remarkable genius was John Downes, another of Wesley's first helpers. In his boyhood, while studying Algebra, he took a sum to his teacher, one day, and said :

“Sir, I can prove this proposition a better way than that by which it is proved in the book.”

The teacher thought otherwise, until the boy showed him his method, and then he acknowledged that it was superior to the one in the text-book.

At another time, this remarkable boy was sent to a clock-maker, to get a clock mended. While the clock-maker was at work, John watched him, observed his tools, and then, going home, actually made himself a set, and constructed a clock, which went as true as any in the town. No wonder Wesley regarded him as being, "by nature, full as great a genius as Sir Isaac Newton!"

Such a mind ought to have been highly educated. But it was not. The road to a college was not opened to John Downes; but, happily, the door into Christ's kingdom was. He entered that, found peace in Jesus, preached long and faithfully, faced persecution with heroic courage, endured frequent sickness patiently, and finally died in a London pulpit. This was, in truth, dying on the field of battle, just as a good man, if required to choose the manner of his death, might wish to die. He was ready for such an end. A day or two previous, he had said:

"I am so happy that I scarce know how to live. I enjoy such fellowship with God as I thought could not be had this side of heaven."

The above examples must be taken as illustrative of the kind of men Wesley employed to lay the foundation-stones of our grand Methodist edifice. As already stated, though not college-bred, they were generally uncommon men, who owed the development of their powers very largely to the action of the grace of God upon their hearts and brains, and to their own persistent self-culture after their conversion. Their weapon was the sword of the Spirit, with which they every-where hewed down the sturdy Goliahs and the delicate Agags who confronted them. The news of their spiritual prowess spread consternation among the enemies of Christ. Though nearly all in the three kingdoms, from drunken gentlemen and drowsy priests, both national and dissenting, down to the unwashed roughs of the ale-houses, were arrayed against them, they marched irresistibly on, guided by their illustrious chief, establishing Methodism, and quickening the expiring piety of our great Father-land! Surely, they did the Lord's work, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Our Wesley's enemies have called him "a

pope," a "tyrant," and other similar hard names, because he directed the labors of his helpers with something like absolute authority. In this they do him very great injustice. Instead of lording it over his preachers, like an irresponsible superior, he was a loving father and faithful friend to them all. Though, as a gentleman and scholar, he was socially far above them, he made them his companions, eating, lodging, and traveling with them. He directed their studies, encouraged them when despondent, advised them when in perplexity, stood by them when assailed by slanderers, and, in short, did every thing that one friend could be expected to do for another. He made the wisest among them his counselors. So just, so mild, and so affectionate was he, that he won their respect, confidence, and affection. Even Southey, who, in many things, condemns and satirizes him, is compelled, by his sense of justice, to say:

"No founder of a monastic order ever more entirely possessed the respect, as well as the love and admiration, of his disciples."

It is true that Wesley exercised great authority

over his preachers, under a rule which said, "Above all, you are to preach when and where I appoint." This rule he enforced as his right, not only because it was an initial condition consented to by every one of his helpers, but also because he was the father, the guide, the governing soul indeed, of the societies to whom his assistants were to minister. Considering the peculiar circumstances and character of the great body of his early helpers, and of his people, there is little room for doubting the fitness, wisdom, and rightfulness of this authority. But we are free to confess that we should admire our noble founder even more than we do, had he surrendered at least a measure of this authority to his conference, when it began to number many men of breadth and culture in its ranks, as it did years before his decease. He honestly thought otherwise, however, and held on to his authority, ever tempering it with fatherly kindness and exercising it most conscientiously, not for his own pleasure, but for the glory of God and the good of his beloved societies. Probably no man ever administered so great a trust with such

singleness of purpose, such purity of motive, such freedom from self-will. If, therefore, the retention of his authority was a fault, it was amply atoned for by the moral grandeur which surrounded its exercise.

Among the few clergymen of the Church of England who stood by and assisted Wesley's movements, was that genuine knight of the cross, William Grimshaw. This remarkable man was a graduate of Cambridge, and Curate of Haworth, in Yorkshire. For several years after his admission to the pulpit he belonged to a class of unconverted clergymen, then very large, who loved hunting deer and rabbits better than winning men to Christ—who preferred the companionship of wine-bibbers to the fellowship of saints. But the current of his life was changed by a mighty inward awakening, followed, after three years of doubt and fear, by peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Shortly after experiencing this important change, he became one of Wesley's assistants, effectively superintending two large circuits, though without resigning his curacy.

This singular genius was a giant in the pulpit. He commanded immense congregations wherever he appeared, and was often sublimely eloquent. He was laborious as Wesley himself, though in a far narrower sphere, sometimes preaching thirty times a week. In courage he was an Ajax, standing undaunted with his beloved leader amid the wild hootings and brutal actions of the most savage mobs. His charity was perfect, for it extended to the expenditure of his last penny for the benefit of the needy. His humility was extreme; for he often performed such menial services as blacking the boots of those itinerants who visited his parsonage, and sometimes giving them his own bed while he slept on the hay in his barn! In some things he was very eccentric. Not unfrequently, while the people in his church were singing, he would descend the pulpit stairs, go into the graveyard and to the adjacent ale-house, and drive or persuade idlers and delinquents into church. He was also a sort of clerical Haroun al Raschid. Like that distinguished caliph, he often disguised himself, and went through his parish to learn the

real character of his people. On one occasion, robed in beggar's rags, he besought charity of one of his parishioners, who had somehow won a high reputation for charity, and was rudely driven from his door! But, notwithstanding these peculiarities, he was pronounced, by one who knew him well, to be "the most humble walker with Christ" he "ever met." "At some seasons," says Wesley, "his faith was so strong and his hope so abundant, that higher degrees of spiritual delight would have overpowered his mortal frame." His death, when fifty-five years old, was triumphant, and his burial was attended by such a weeping multitude that Wesley pronounced it "more ennobling than all the pomp of a royal funeral." There is no doubt that his herculean labors contributed largely to the spread of Methodism in Yorkshire.

On a Sabbath morning, in 1756, when Wesley, overtaken by superabundant labors, was hopelessly longing for some one to assist him in administering the sacrament at the West-street Chapel, London, a young minister, fresh from the services of his own ordination, came to his aid.

“How wonderful are the ways of God !” exclaimed Wesley ; “when my bodily strength failed, and none in England were able and willing to assist me, He sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland !”

This young clergyman, whose timely aid called forth this grateful exclamation, was no less a personage than the seraphic Fletcher. He owed his conversion to Methodism, and richly repaid the debt by the extraordinary services he rendered its admired chief, whom he loved with the fondness of a devoted son. He was, indeed, Mr. Wesley’s most valuable clerical friend. Although he accepted the living of Madeley, he made his kitchen a Methodist chapel, and permitted Wesley to organize a society among his parishioners. He corresponded with his great leader, and nobly stood by him during a disturbance in his London societies, on the question of Christian perfection, led by Maxfield, Bell, and others, which cost him six hundred members in a few months. When others stood aloof from him in that storm, Fletcher cheered him on, exclaiming :

"O, that I could stand in the gap! Don't be afraid of a wreck, for Jesus is in the ship!"

But the greatest service he rendered his distinguished friend was performed with the pen, in the great war waged by the Calvinists against the doctrines of Methodism, under the leadership of Berridge, Hill, and Toplady. Then Fletcher came forward with his famous "Checks." These works flash with the brilliancy of rare wit and genius, and are swords of Damascus steel, which divide the joints and lay bare the creed of the ultra-Calvinists in all its horrible deformity. They did immense polemic service for Wesley and young Methodism, and, should that old controversy ever be revived, will serve again as an armory, from which new combatants will arm themselves for victorious battle.

But, high as Fletcher stands among polemical writers, he is still more highly distinguished for his rare piety. Benson, who knew him well, pronounced him "almost an angel in human flesh." So near heaven did he live, that while serving as President of Lady Huntingdon's College, at

Trevecka, his seraphic soul communicated such a flame to the students, that they preferred listening to his burning words on religion to the study of Virgil or Cicero. They would hang upon his lips until their eyes were overflowed with tears. Then he would exclaim :

“As many of you as are athirst for the fullness of the Spirit, follow me into my room !”

The deeply impressed lads would follow him in troops. Kneeling around their holy chief, they would pray for hours, until they could kneel no longer from sheer physical weariness. Several times, on these unique occasions, the enraptured Fletcher was so filled with the love of God that he cried :

“O, my God, withhold thine hand, or the vessel will burst !”

Wesley desired to make this angelic man his successor. Fletcher's humility led him to decline this proposed honor. It was well : Fletcher's health was unequal to that herculean task. He broke down under his parish and other labors, vainly sought to recover his health by traveling

awhile with Wesley, and then spent a year or two in retirement among his friends.

During his retirement, the Conference of 1777 met at Stoke Newington. One day, Fletcher, emaciated and apparently dying, entered the conference leaning on the arm of his host, Mr. Ireland. The effect of his presence was electric. Every man rose spontaneously to his feet. Wesley advanced to meet his beloved friend, who at once began speaking to the preachers. A few words subdued every one present to tears. Fearing for the speaker's life, Wesley dropped on his knees and began to pray. The preachers joined him in supplicating that his friend's life might be spared a little longer. His faith rose with his petitions, and he closed with an emphasis which made every heart leap as he said :

"He shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord !"

These were prophetic words. Although Fletcher appeared to be already in the hands of the Death Angel, he recovered his health, and lived eight years longer. He married Miss Bosanquet, did

much more good service for the Lord, and then died (August 14, 1785), exclaiming to his weeping wife:

“O Polly, my dear Polly, *God is love!* Shout, shout aloud! I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth!”

When Wesley was seventy-three years old, Thomas Coke, Curate of South Petherton traveled twenty miles to see him. This young clergyman was a native of Brecon, Wales, and a gentleman by birth and education. After graduating at Oxford, he served as chief magistrate in his native city awhile, and then accepted a curacy, though as yet unconverted. That good old book, “Aleline’s Alarm,” awakened him; a Methodist class-leader showed him the way to the cross. When he sought Wesley’s acquaintance, he was about twenty-nine years old, short of stature, but remarkably handsome and graceful. He had long dark hair, which flowed in curling masses over his shoulders. His eyes were dark and penetrating, his brow white as alabaster, his address and manner such as belonged to a man accustomed to good society. What pleased Wesley was not the external

man so much as the simplicity and earnestness of his spirit. The attraction was mutual. From the hour of their meeting they became fast friends.

The results of their meeting were important on both sides. To Wesley, it brought a traveling companion for his old age, a confidential adviser, a valuable assistant, a trusted friend; and that, too, about the time when Fletcher was laid aside by illness. To Coke, it brought an entire change in the current of his life. It took him from his curacy, made him a traveling preacher, and an honored coadjutor to the greatest man of his age. It led to his becoming the first superintendent, or bishop, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the father of those magnificent Wesleyan missions which now belt the globe, and the instrument of spiritual good to thousands upon thousands of human souls. Surely, it was one of those providential events of which there were so many in Wesley's wonderful career.

When Wesley was sixty-seven years old, he lost his early friend and former coadjutor, the eloquent

Whitefield. This celebrated Christian orator, after his temporary alienation from Wesley on account of doctrinal differences, regarded him with admiring friendship to the end of his own life, although his labors were in the interests of Calvinistic Methodism. He was ever on the wing—now in Great Britian, then in America—but every-where enchanting thousands with the spells of his mighty eloquence, and winning hundreds of dead souls to Christ. At last, worn out with thirty-four years of incessant labor, having preached eighteen thousand sermons, he quietly yielded up his life at Newburyport, Massachusetts, where his remains are now buried, on the morning of September 30, 1770. The day before, he had preached two hours in the open air, at Exeter, New Hampshire, and exhorted on the stairs of his lodging at Newburyport, in the evening. The next morning he was in heaven. Literally, he died, according to his known desire, like a warrior with his armor on.

Wesley preached his funeral sermon at two places, in London, to immense multitudes of people, speaking in the highest terms of his zeal,

activity, tenderness, frankness, courage, steadfastness, and other virtues, but generously abstaining from allusion to his separation from himself. Wesley was great enough both to forgive and forget wrongs done to himself. He had the charity which "beareth all things."

The fruits of Whitefield's peerless labors in America were reaped by Churches already existing, or left to perish by the wayside. To organize—that is, to preserve the results of his work—was not that great orator's vocation. With Wesley it was far otherwise. Nature made him a grand organizer. To his mind, the first convert in every new field was the nucleus of a society, and every helper a destined "society" builder. His genius, at least this feature of it, impressed itself upon his followers so deeply, that the humblest of them, when thrown by Providence into new circumstances, became both workers and organizers. To this spirit we must attribute the rise and progress of Methodism in America.

When a coral reef, by gathering to itself the

floating weeds and waste of the surrounding ocean, becomes fitted to produce vegetation, the kindly winds bring to it the light-winged seeds of many a beautiful flower. The birds help the winds, and bring the weightier seeds of shrubs and trees. These take root, and grow ; and thus, by the ministries of winds and birds, the barren reef becomes a lovely island, clothed with the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics.

Very similar was the means by which our beloved Methodism was borne from England to America. Wafted by the ocean breezes, the merchant vessel brought over its precious seeds in the persons of Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge, two converts of Methodism in the Emerald Isle. The latter planted it in Maryland, the former in New York. It grew vigorously in both places, so that, in 1769, Wesley, by earnest request, sent out two traveling preachers—Boardman and Pilmoor—to water and cultivate it. Then, like a thrifty vine, it soon spread its fruitful branches on every side. More workmen were demanded. Wesley, though seventy years of age, cherished

serious thoughts of venturing across the stormy Atlantic. The bare idea alarmed his preachers and people. They objected strongly. Said Wesley:

"If I go to America, I must do a thing which I hate as bad as I hate the devil."

"What is that?" demanded his friend.

"I must keep a *secret*," he rejoined.

But his nature was too frank and transparent to permit the concealment of his purpose from his confiding people. The idea was abandoned. More preachers were sent over; among them Rankin, and Asbury, the grandest character in our American Methodism. The war of our glorious Revolution soon drove all these English itinerants back again, Asbury excepted. He toiled on, through hardships, suspicions, and persecutions, until the triumph of our national arms restored peace to the country. The Methodists in the United States were then nearly fifteen thousand strong, with eighty-three traveling preachers. But none of these preachers was ordained; and could not, consistently with the prevailing ideas of Church order, administer the sacraments. Asbury wrote to

Wesley. He responded by ordaining two of his preachers—Whatcoat and Vasey—elders, and setting apart Dr. Coke, who was already an ordained priest or elder of the Church of England, to be a *superintendent* of the work in America. He appointed Asbury a superintendent also, giving him joint authority with Coke.

Coke, with his newly ordained elders, soon came over, and, after obtaining the consent of the American conference, set apart Asbury to the office given him by Wesley. The two then ordained other elders, and henceforth our Church in America had no difficulty respecting the sacraments.

All this was done with Mr. Wesley's approval. True, he was not pleased with his "*superintendents*" when they called themselves "*bishops*." He did not like to have the latter name applied to any of his preachers. But this was only one of the lingering prejudices of his education. Possibly it arose out of a fear that its wearers might seek to become *prelates*. He knew that a Scriptural bishop is only an elder invested with certain

powers of administration among his brethren, for the sake of order. Still he did not like their assumption of the name, and would, no doubt, have been better pleased had Coke and Asbury styled themselves simply superintendents.

Nevertheless, there can be no just questioning about the right of the American preachers and people to apply the title of bishops to their chief officers. Wesley could not, and did not, after this time, claim the same degree of paternal authority over them as he could over his societies in the mother country, because his instrumentality in raising them up was more remote and indirect. Certainly, after their organization into a Church, they had independent authority—the unchallenged right of self-government. They gave respectful attention to Wesley's wishes, but did what they thought to be best under their circumstances. More than this was not his due; and he was too wise and good to claim more. It is a curious fact, which you would do well to note carefully, that the enemies of our Church raise more objections to our episcopacy than it ever entered into the

heart of our great founder to conceive. He indeed said that men might call him a knave, but never, with his consent, should they call him a bishop. This was strong language. But, after all, the only thing he disliked in it was its *name*; they hate and fear the *thing itself*!





Chapter XV.

WESLEY'S PHILANTHROPY AND LOVE OF CHILDREN.

YOU must not imagine that because our Wesley toiled, with all the ardor of his great soul, for the *spiritual* interests of man, he cared nothing for their bodily comforts. On the contrary, he stood in the front rank with the philanthropists of his day, and was one of the most charitable of men. The sight of a hungry, ragged, or sick body, always stirred his tender heart, and moved his ready hand to give relief. No poor wretch could ever justly charge him with the crime of "passing by on the other side." His faith dropped the golden fruit of charity into every needy hand it saw. Let us select a few examples of his public and private charities.

At Bristol, one Winter, a severe frost threw hundreds out of work; and starvation stood staring horribly at the door of many industrious households. Then Wesley's sympathetic heart moved him to take public collections, with the avails of which he fed from one hundred to one hundred and fifty of the sufferers daily, until the crisis passed.

At another time, during the prevalence of the "spotted fever" in the same city, besides ministering consolation to the sufferers by visiting their bedsides at the risk of his own life, he took twelve of the poorest people he could find into his meeting-house, and employed them at carding and spinning cotton for four months, thus saving them "both from want and from idleness." This was both self-sacrificing and inventive charity.

There was a great frost in 1763, which closed the Thames, and threw thousands out of work. Multitudes were compelled to beg their bread from door to door, and many poor wretches were frozen to death in the streets of London. Then, with spontaneous and ingenuous charity, our noble

Wesley threw open the doors of the Foundry, and freely distributed "pease-pottage" and "barley-broth" to all comers. He also collected five hundred dollars from his poor but large-hearted society there, for the "further relief of the poor and destitute."

Nor were his public charities limited to extraordinary occasions. To care for the poor, especially those of his own societies, was his habit. For many years, he spent the first days of the New Year trudging through the mud and slush of London streets, often ankle-deep, to solicit subscriptions from the rich for the benefit of the poor who worshiped in his chapels. These subscriptions often amounted to one thousand dollars. To secure the judicious distribution of these funds, he not only organized a system of visitation, but he often visited the destitute at their homes, "to see with his own eye what their wants were, and how they might be effectually relieved." His charity used its feet as well as its hands. It was as painstaking as it was liberal.

The following illustrations of his more personal

and private charities are very interesting, and give a still deeper insight into the beauty of his character.

When he was quite an old man, during one of his tours in Ireland, his chaise stuck in a bog. Leaving his companions to get it out as best they might, he proceeds on foot. Presently he is overtaken by a peasant, whose sorrowful looks touch his susceptible heart. He inquires into the cause of the poor fellow's distress:

"I owed me landlord twenty shillings, sur," the man replies, "and he has turned me and my family out of doors. I've been to see my relations, sur; but not a bit will they help me."

Forgetful of his own vexations, our charitable founder puts his hand into his pocket, takes out a guinea, and hands it to the astonished peasant. The poor fellow, scarcely knowing what to do, drops upon his knees, prays for his benefactor, and then, leaping to his feet, exclaims:

"O, I shall have a house! I shall have a house over my head!"

Wesley had more, even a poor man's blessing, with God's smile, in his heart!

One day Wesley stops for refreshment at an Irish tavern. On entering the parlor, he sees a poor play-actor reclining on a couch in the corner, and the stout mistress of the house standing before him, bawling and threatening to turn the poor fellow and his wife out of doors, because he could not pay her for his fortnight's board. The dejected face of the poor cowed player touches our founder's heart. After questioning the virago for the facts, he says to the unhappy man, in very pitiful tones :

"You serve the stage, young man ; would I could teach you to serve your God ! You would find him a better Master. Pardon me, I mean not to upbraid you or hurt your feelings."

Then, putting a guinea into the fellow's hand, he adds :

"My Master sent you this. Retire, and thank him !"

"Who is your Master ?" the actor cries. "Where and how shall I thank him ?"

"God is my Master. Return him thanks !"

"How ?"

"On your knees when in private ; in public at all times, in your principles and in your practice. Farewell. Go, comfort your wife and children !"

The astonished player, unable to speak, expresses his gratitude in sobs and tears, and quits the room. Wesley now turns to the irate landlady, and asks the amount of her claim for the poor player's board.

"Fifteen shillings," she responds. "If he does not pay me, I'll seize his rags up-stairs, and pay myself!"

"I will pay you," rejoins Wesley, sternly. "But what can you think of yourself? How terrible will be your condition on your death-bed, calling for that mercy which you refuse to a fellow-creature! I shudder while under your roof, and will leave it as I would the pestilence. May the Lord pardon your sins!"

Then, placing fifteen shillings on the table, he leaves the room. The termagant sweeps the money into her ample pocket, and jeeringly exclaims:

"Pardon my sins? Pardon my sins, indeed!"

And why not his own? I'll warrant he has as much to answer for as I have: getting a parcel of people together that ought to be minding their work. Why, it was only yesterday that he was preaching every body to the devil that encouraged the players; and to-day he is the first to do it himself!"

"This gentleman is a clergyman, I suppose?" remarks one of the spectators.

"A clergyman!" retorts the virago, with a bitter sneer. "Not he, indeed! It's only John Wesley, the Methodist, that goes preaching up and down, and draws all the idle vagabonds of the country after him."

Poor woman! She could not comprehend the beauty of her quondam guest's rare charity. No wonder, since multitudes, all over Great Britain, who thought themselves wise in their generation, were also too blind to perceive the moral grandeur of the man who could denounce play-acting and play-going in the pulpit, and yet pay a poor starving player's tavern-bill! So they once called the "Master of the house" Beelzebub!

An artist, named Culy, had often requested Wesley to sit for his bust, and had as often been refused. But, one day, the persevering artist said :

“Knowing, sir, that you value money as a means of doing good, if you will grant my request, I will give you ten guineas for the first ten minutes that you sit ; and for every minute exceeding that time you shall receive an additional guinea.”

“What !” cries Wesley, “do I understand you aright? Will you give me ten guineas for having my bust taken? Well, I agree to it.”

Thus you see how the artist found the good man's vulnerable side. A single appeal to his love of charity carried his point. Many addressed to his vanity had utterly failed. But, then, vanity, the vice of little minds, did not enter into the texture of Wesley's great character.

Eight minutes suffices to secure a model of the reformer's face, in plaster. Then, after washing his face, he accepts the proffered guineas, exclaiming :

“Well, I never till now earned money so speedily. But what shall we do with it?”

To settle this question, he sallies forth with his friend. They cross Westminster Bridge. There they meet a forlorn-looking woman with three children, crying bitterly. Her sad tale informs them that her husband has just been dragged to prison for a paltry debt of eighteen shillings. One of Wesley's easily earned guineas speedily sets her husband free, and makes her heart happy.

Delighted with this loving exploit, Wesley leads his friend to a debtor's prison. He is shown a man who, for an insignificant debt of ten shillings, had been immured within its walls for months. A second guinea delivers this unfortunate from the iron grasp of his merciless creditor.

"Gentlemen," says the wondering turnkey, "as you have come here in search of poverty, pray go up-stairs, if it be not too late."

With swift steps, these angels of mercy ascend the stairs, and enter a wretched room. Seated in one corner, they see a young man, almost a skeleton; in the other, a dying woman, lying on some straw, with a dead child by her side!

"Send for a doctor!" cries Wesley, in tones

which showed that pity and indignation were struggling together in his generous heart for the mastery.

The doctor came ; but the woman could not be saved. Starvation had finished its horrible work. Wesley's remaining guineas gradually brought flesh to the bones and health to the cheeks of the unhappy widower. But our great philanthropist does not stop here. He collects money enough among his charitable friends to effect the debtor's release. The poor man proves himself worthy of this charity ; for he quickly applies himself to business, soon pays off his old debts, and then, emulating his deliverer, establishes a fund for the relief of small debtors. By a singular allotment of Providence, the first person aided by this fund is the very creditor through whose unmercifulness its donor had been kept in prison !

These examples of our founder's charity are all we have space to record. Think not that such deeds were exceptional with him. They were rather the daily fruits of his faith. They adorned his life from the beginning of his religious career

at Oxford, to the day of his exit from the sphere of his earthly labors. They consumed all his pecuniary resources, but made him rich in heavenly treasure. May the reader catch his spirit, and show his own faith to the world by similar golden deeds !

Wesley's sympathies were as broad as the sufferings of mankind. No man was so low as to be beneath his regards, no wickedness so high as to escape his censure, no genuine reformer so unpopular as to stand uncheered by his clarion voice. In proof of this, we may mention the fact of his avowed hostility to slavery, at a very early period in his public career. While his friend Whitefield, failing to rise above the ideas of the times, tarnished his fair fame by holding slaves for the benefit of his Orphan-house in Georgia ; and while, as yet, the voices of Sharpe and Wilberforce had scarcely been heard by the leaden ears of the British public, our bold, progressive Wesley, in his own nervous style, fearlessly declares the profitable—and then honorable, but now accursed—slave-trade to be the “ execrable sum of all

villainies!" When popular censure thunders its terrors round the heads of the bold men who, in Parliament, demand the abolition of that horrid trade, our true, brave-hearted philanthropist stands up for them, writes against the "great evil" "thoughts that breathe" in "words that burn," and uses his great influence among his people in behalf of the benevolent cause they advocate. In this he showed his avowed hostility to sin, and his regard for purity, to be genuine, and no shams. Had he defended any one form of sin, who would have credited him with sincerity in his professed devotion to the work of "spreading Scriptural holiness?"

We might further illustrate his philanthropy by telling you of his activity in reviving what was called the "Society for the Reformation of Manners," of his establishment of a "Dispensary" for supplying the poor with medicines, and of his co-operation with the "Bible Society" and kindred institutions. But have we not said enough to satisfy you that our Wesley ranks as high for his philanthropy as for his sublime spirituality?

Possessing a heart so overflowing with the "milk of human kindness," our Wesley could scarcely fail to be a lover of children and a friend of every movement in their behalf. A few facts will show you how he loved them.

When Robert Southey was a boy, he was in the same house with Wesley at Bristol. The sprightly boy and his beautiful little sister were running down-stairs one morning, when Wesley overtook them on the landing. Lifting the sweet girl in his arms, the great man kissed her, and then, after placing her on her feet again, he put his hand on the boy's head, and blessed him. Years after, when this boy had become England's famous poet laureate, he said, with tears in his eyes and tenderness in his tones :

"I feel as though I had the blessing of that good man upon me still."

This interesting fact is characteristic. Wesley loved children. He showed it not only by such little attentions, but by laboring for their education and conversion, from the beginning to the end of his remarkable career.

While as yet groping for his own salvation at Oxford and Savannah, he organized, supported, and visited schools for poor children. After his conversion and first spiritual successes, he hastened to found a school at Kingswood for the neglected children of the colliers, and at the Foundry, in London, for the poverty-stricken little ones of the neighborhood. The former, after a few years, was so modified, as to become a sort of college for the sons of his helpers. As such, it made for itself a noble record, and became the nursing mother of many a historic name in English Methodism.

In all his educational movements, his chief aim was the spiritual welfare of the young. Kingswood was governed with this as its great end. For this, also, he, in 1743, wrote his "Instructions for Children;" and, at his first conference, he required his preachers "to meet the children in every place, and give them suitable exhortations."

Our founder was no sign-post, but a true man. He never affected zeal, nor required of others what he was unwilling to do himself. Hence, he kept his own instructions, and met the children of his

societies wherever practicable. His Journal abounds in instances such as the following: At Whitehaven he met the children, and five of them found peace with God; at Publow he "spent an hour with a company of children in exhortation and prayer, and was much comforted with them;" and at Kingswood, "he had much satisfaction with the children."

These meetings were, in very many cases, productive of rich fruit. At Weardale, in Methodist families, the greatest part of the children, above ten years old, were converted to God. Of one hundred and sixty-five persons in the society, forty-three were children, thirty of whom were found rejoicing in God. At Kingswood, a very extraordinary work of grace was frequently wrought among the boys. Wesley was once the unseen witness of a boys' prayer-meeting there. Standing at a window outside, he saw first one or two, then more and more, until above thirty were gathered together. All but three or four were soon on their knees, pouring out their souls before God, in a manner not easily to be described. Sometimes

one, sometimes more, prayed aloud ; sometimes a cry went up from them all. "Such a sight," exclaims the enraptured spectator of this unusual scene, "I never saw before!"

Still more affecting was a scene at Stockton-upon-Tees, where over sixty children, between six and fourteen years of age, were awakened. As the venerable Wesley (he was an old man at this time) descended from the pulpit, these children literally "inclosed him," falling upon their knees. He kneeled down also, and began praying. The retiring congregation returned to view this unwonted but beautiful spectacle. A Divine fire was kindled, until every heart was touched, and every eye filled with tears. Do you wonder that Wesley asks, respecting this event:

"Is not this a new thing in the earth? God begins his work in children."

It was new then, but not now. But why are not such scenes more frequent? Is the Lord's hand shortened? or is the faith of the Church weak?

Wesley's ideas of discipline over children were

very rigid ; too much so, doubtless. He had great faith in the rod. He exacted too much, and allowed too little for their natural thoughtlessness. Nevertheless, such was the gentleness of his manner, such the sweetness of his spirit and the mildness of his aspect, that they loved him, and clung to him wherever he went. A fact or two must suffice to illustrate this statement :

During one of his tours in Ireland, as he was approaching a place called Killchrist, a little girl met and spoke to him. She told him that she had sat up all night, and had walked two miles to see him. Delighted with her simplicity, he took her into his chaise, and was still more pleased to find that his enthusiastic little admirer was continually rejoicing in God.

At Ballinderry, one day, when he kneeled in a family circle to pray for an unconverted old lady present, a little girl crept, with loving confidence, close behind him, weeping and following up his prayer, by saying :

“O grandma, have you no sins to cry for as well as me?”

What but love gave this child confidence to become a fellow-laborer with so great a man?

At Great-Horton, Wesley mounted a horse-block for a pulpit, one day ; but no one listened, until the children, attracted by his gentleness, flocked around him. The people, following their example, gathered around them, and he soon had a numerous congregation.

At Oldham there was a unique spectacle, which reminds one of that noted scene at Jerusalem, where the glad little ones sung loud hosannas to a greater than Wesley. Children lined the street where he was to preach. They ran joyfully around and before him, previous to the service. When it was over, they closed the venerable preacher in, and would not be content until he shook each of them by the hand!

Such affectionate demonstrations as these, repeatedly occurring, prove that our great founder had a soul full of tenderness; for what but a heart overflowing with love for children could have called out such displays of loving confidence?

Wesley was one day resting at the house of a

gentleman named Bush, the keeper of a boarding-school. Two of the pupils had a fierce quarrel, fighting and kicking each other furiously. Bush separated and led them into the parlor to Mr. Wesley. Instead of harshly reproving, he talked to them in the kindest manner, concluding his remarks with this simple, well-known verse from Watts:

“Birds in their little nests agree :
And 't is a shameful sight,
When children of one family
Fall out, and chide, and fight.”

He then added, with affectionate authority:

“You must be reconciled. Go and shake hands with each other!”

The boys obeyed without hesitation; and then he continued:

“Now put your arms round each other's neck, and kiss each other.”

The subdued boys again did as they were told. He next took two pieces of bread from the tea-table, folded them together, and told each boy to take a part. They did so, and he said:

“Now you have broken bread together.”

His next step was to require them to drink some tea out of one cup ; and then, after telling them they had both drunk from the same cup, he put his hands upon their heads and blessed them.

The next morning, at prayer-time, he took these boys to his arms, and blessed them again. Need I add that, after this kind and patriarchal treatment, these quarrelsome lads were reconciled? It could scarcely be otherwise. It was by such a union of love with authority that Wesley maintained his almost unexampled influence, not over children only, but also over his preachers and people.

Fourteen years before Robert Raikes began his Sunday-school, a young lady named Ball, “a favorite correspondent” of our founder, began a Sunday-school at High Wycombe. The year following, she thus described it in a letter to Wesley. She says :

“The children meet twice a week, every Sunday and Monday. They are a wild little company, but seem willing to be instructed. I labor among

them, earnestly desiring to promote the interests of the Church of Christ."

We wonder that this letter did not suggest to the fertile mind of Wesley the idea of establishing Sunday-schools in connection with all his societies. But there is no evidence that it did so. Perhaps the Church was not then quite ripe for developing the institution. Possibly Robert Raikes was better fitted to be God's instrument in securing for it the sudden favor it so speedily acquired among all denominations a few years later. Be this as it may, it is certain that, though Wesley missed the honor of founding Sunday-schools, he was wise enough to perceive their value and to give them his warmest support from the very first. With the enthusiasm of a philanthropist, he exclaims:

"I verily think these Sunday-schools one of the noblest specimens of charity which have been set on foot in England since the days of William the Conqueror!"

Again, in writing to one of his assistants, he says, with prophetic foresight:

"I am glad you have taken in hand the blessed

work of setting up Sunday-schools. It seems these will be one of the greatest means of reviving religion throughout the nation."

And again he exclaims, with joyous hope :

"Who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians?"

It is claimed that Wesley gave the Sunday-school its most beautiful and valuable feature—*gratuitous* instruction. It is certain that he had a very successful Sunday-school in his society at Bolton, only two years after Robert Raikes established his at Gloucester, and that its teachers "all gave their services gratuitously." It is equally certain that the practice, then prevailing outside of his societies, was to pay Sunday teachers for their services. It is also very certain that he gave to the teaching in his Sunday-schools a more decidedly religious character than that which generally prevailed. Secular instruction, with a little divine truth thrown in, was then the rule in most other Sunday-schools. In his, the Word of God was the teacher's chief theme ; the salvation of the child's soul his first object. Hence, it is more

than probable that to him belongs the honor of introducing that element of benevolent teaching service into the Sunday-school, which adorns it with its greatest moral beauty, and is the chief source of its efficiency and perpetuity.

Do not these few typical facts concerning the relations of our founder to the children of his generation, justify us in asking for his memory a warm place in the hearts of the young people of this age?





Chapter XVI.

WESLEY'S COURAGE AND ACTIVITY.

OUR great founder was a brave man. His nerves did not tremble, nor his heart beat out of time, when danger confronted him. Here is an example of his physical courage.

He was on his way to St. Ives. On reaching Hayle, his postilion, finding the sands over which they must needs pass overflowed by the rising tide, stops his horses, being reluctant to face so great a danger. Seeing the carriage stop, a sea-captain steps up, and says to the driver :

“You had better not attempt to cross the sands until the tide goes out.”

Wesley, hearing the remark, replies :

“I have to preach at St. Ives this afternoon. I *must* keep my appointment.”

Then, putting his head out of the carriage window, he shouts to the driver, who is mounted on one of the horses :

“Take the sea ! Take the sea !”

Encouraged by this electrical cry, the driver dashes into the foaming waves. He is soon in deep water. The horses are compelled to swim ; the carriage-wheels sink into ruts and hollows in the sands ; the horses, affrighted by the splash and roar of the waves, snort and rear in most fearful style. The driver is almost swept from his saddle, and is only kept from despair by thinking that on him depends the life of the holy man in the carriage. He carried Wesley—a greater than Cæsar—and his fortunes.

At the height of the peril, the voice of Wesley reaches the disheartened postilion’s ear. Turning round in his saddle with difficulty, he sees Wesley’s head protruding from the carriage-window. His long locks are dripping, but his face is as calm and his voice as firm as if no danger were nigh. He asks :

“What is thy name, driver ?”

"Peter, sir," shouts the man.

"Peter, fear not. Thou shalt not sink," responds the fearless Wesley.

The driver is encouraged. With whip, spur, and voice he urges his horses on. The point of danger is soon safely passed, and in due time they reach the inn at St. Ives.

No sooner is Wesley out of the carriage than he orders change of clothing, fire, and refreshment, not for himself, but for the faithful Peter. He next sees that his horses are faithfully groomed and otherwised cared for, and then, forgetful of his own comfort and punctual to his appointment, he proceeds in his wet clothing, and without stopping to take food, to the church, where he preaches with his wonted energy and power.

This incident is characteristic. Wesley's physical courage never failed in any of his manifold perils. Such bravery is quite as rare as the considerateness and self-forgetfulness which accompanied it. Had Wesley been a soldier, he would, like Nelson and Napoleon, have stood unmoved amid the rage of battle. Though he had the

sensibility of a woman, his nerves were as iron, in the presence of danger.

More fierce than the raging waters were the mobs which, as you have seen, frequently assailed Wesley in the early years of his itinerant career. In those times the lower orders were ignorant, coarse, brutal, almost savage. Esquires and gentlemen were cruel and bitter in their hatreds. The former class, goaded by the latter and inspired by Satan, often sought by violent acts to hinder Wesley and his coadjutors from preaching the truth which was turning the religious world upside down. The heroic demeanor with which our brave Wesley faced these turbulent crowds, appears in the following facts :

He had preached at Wednesbury, in Staffordshire, without molestation, and with blessed results. Hundreds of colliers were saved. After his departure, the parish minister, taking offense at the zeal of these converts, stirred up the dregs of the people to attack them. They did so, the magistrates winking at their unlawful proceedings. For nearly five months they treated the Methodists

like mad dogs, beating them, pelting them with stones, dragging them through the gutters, breaking their windows, destroying their furniture, and threatening their lives. At length, Wesley, hearing of these outrageous proceedings, hastens to the scene of danger. Bravely bearding the lion, he preaches boldly at noon, in the middle of the town, to a vast congregation. Not a tongue wags, not a finger is raised against him. But in the evening, the rabble gathers in mighty strength, and, surrounding the house in which he is lodged, ferociously shouts:

“Bring out the minister! We will have the minister!”

Serene and unawed, Wesley, pointing at the leader of the mob, says to one of his friends:

“Take that man by the hand, and bring him into the house.”

Wesley's self-command and authoritative air awes the ringleader of the mob. He suffers himself to be led within the door. Wesley then says to him:

“Bring in one or two of those angry fellows!”

The fellow obeys, and brings in two of his companions. They, too, are speedily quieted by a word or two from Wesley, who finally says to them :

“Make way for me. I want to go out to the people.”

They obey him, and he goes forth like a lamb amid wolves, mounts a chair, and asks :

“What is it you want with me, my good friends?”

“Go with us to a justice,” reply several voices.

“With all my heart,” he rejoins, adding a few other remarks, which have such a marvelous effect that many of the people cry :

“The gentleman is honest. We will spill our blood in his defense.”

They now proceed, through the mud, rain, and darkness of an October evening, to Bentley Hall, two miles distant, and the home of a magistrate named Lane.

“We have brought Mr. Wesley before your worship,” say several fellows, who had preceded the main body of the mob.

Afraid, probably, of dealing with open injustice toward a man of Wesley's national reputation, Lane responds :

"What have I to do with Mr. Wesley? Go and carry him back again."

But the mob persists. Mr. Lane must see Mr. Wesley. He declines ; but his son comes out, and asks :

"What is the matter, friends?"

"Why, an't please you," replies the spokesman of the mob, "they sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning. And what would your worship advise us to do?"

"To go home and be quiet," is the sensible response of young Lane.

Here this farce would have ended, but for a proposal from one of the mob to go to another justice in the neighboring village of Walsal. This changes the affair into almost a tragedy ; for the Walsal rabble, hearing that Wesley is among them, rush fiercely out to find him. But, by this time, some fifty of the first mob have been so won over by Wesley's grand demeanor, that they

have become his defenders. A fight ensues. The Walsal men conquer, and Wesley is left to the tender mercies of the infuriated conquerors. Their noise is like the roaring of the sea. They try to throw him down in the mud that they may trample him to death. But he resolutely keeps on his feet. They tear his clothes. One man tries to hit him on the head with a bludgeon, but happily misses his victim. Another gives him a blow in the mouth, which makes the blood gush out. They pull his long, beautiful hair. When he asks permission to speak, they shout :

“No, no! Knock his brains out. Down with him, kill him at once. Crucify the dog, crucify him !”

At last he obtains a hearing, and, with absolute self-command, addresses them in a strong persuasive voice. He then breaks forth in prayer to God. The rabble yield to his power. Their leader, a noted prize-fighter, suddenly exclaims :

“Sir, I will spend my life for you! Follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.”

This turns the tide in his favor. A man cries, "For shame, for shame—let him go!" The rabble now fall back. The prize-fighter leads our bruised but triumphant Wesley back to his lodgings at Wednesbury. The mob is conquered; and henceforth Methodism grows, undisturbed by popular violence, in that town.

Many more such facts as this, and kindred ones, already related, might be given, did space permit, to show that our Wesley was rarely endowed with both physical and moral courage. This virtue, sustained by an unshrinking faith in God, made him one of the most heroic men of his own or any other times—an uncrowned king of men.

From the time of Wesley's first journey to the north of England to the end of his days, the exigencies of his ever-expanding work required him to be almost constantly traveling from place to place. He traversed every part of the country, from the "Land's-End," in Cornwall, to the Highlands of Scotland. He crossed the Channel to Ireland. Ever on the wing, he traveled some

forty-five hundred miles, and preached about eight hundred times, per annum. These journeys were not made in comfortable railway-cars moving with the fleetness of birds, but on horseback, and, in his later years, in his private carriage. Besides preaching, he wrote an almost fabulous amount of matter; published innumerable tracts, pamphlets, and books; visited the sick; met the societies and bands; addressed the Sunday-schools; looked after the poor; collected money for the erection of churches, superintended the construction of his chapels, and presided at his annual conferences. He was always busy with God's work, from four o'clock in the morning until ten at night, his hour for retiring. He read on horseback, and wrote in his carriage. When not traveling, he never spent less than three hours—sometimes nine or ten—alone in literary labor. Thus, you see, he was never idle, never triflingly employed, never at rest, except during the six hours he allotted to sleep. As to "Summer vacations," they did not enter into his thoughts. The work of God was his meat and drink, change of scene his only

repose. If imperfect in some things, he was certainly perfect in his activity, and set the world an example of diligence in the improvement of time which some may hope to equal, but which none can surpass.

To appreciate fully the virtue of his peerless physical activity, you must keep in mind the fact that it resulted not from natural taste, but from a sense of duty. It was the perpetual offering of a loving heart to its Savior. His tastes strongly inclined him, at the beginning, to a quiet literary life in the cloisters of his beloved Oxford, or in some secluded vale of beautiful England. These tastes, though curbed in by his unyielding will, often made themselves felt. Hence, when spending a day or two at Miss Bosanquet's charming retreat, we hear him exclaim :

"How willingly could I spend the residue of a busy life in this delightful retirement ! But,

'Man was not born in shades to lie ;'

and

"Up and be doing ! Labor on till

'Death sings a requiem to the parting soul.'"

When at the secluded village of Finstock, he writes: "How many days should I spend here if I was to do my own will! Not so; I am to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work."

At another visit to the same lovely spot, he writes again: "How gladly could I spend a few weeks in this delightful solitude! But I must not rest yet. As long as God gives me strength to labor, I must use it."

Again, when at Hinxworth, he half-sadly exclaims: "How gladly could I repose awhile here! But repose is not for me in this world." And at still another lovely place, he writes: "I found a natural wish, O for ease and a resting place! Not yet, but eternity is at hand."

In these yearnings after a respite from incessant toil, we hear the voices of our laborious Wesley's taste and temperament. His responses unveil the motive of his activity. It was the glorious outgrowth of his loving self-consecration to his Redeemer's work. He used up all the forces of his mind and body in active Christian work, not

because he loved the toil, but because the needs of his beloved Savior's cause required it at his hands.

Wesley was a great economist of time. He never wasted a moment. Few things ruffled him as did the loss of minutes, through lack of punctuality in others. Having appointed a breakfast meeting at three o'clock in the morning with a friend in York, he said to his coachman:

"Have the carriage at the door at four. I do not mean a quarter or five minutes past, but four."

The man understood his master, and, while the minster clock was striking four the next morning, Wesley was stepping into his chaise.

This punctuality pleased him. But on one occasion, when an unpunctual man had kept him waiting, he said sharply:

"I have lost ten minutes forever!"

To one who once said, "You need not be in a hurry, sir," he replied:

"A hurry! No: I have no time to be in a hurry."

Few men had a greater number of cares resting upon him than Wesley. Being the center and

source of authority to preachers and people, he was incessantly applied to for advice, help, and interference, both personally and by letter. Wherever he tarried, his lodgings were besieged with callers, like the office of a minister of state. He had to listen to complaints, adjust differences, redress grievances, administer discipline, examine the financial and spiritual condition of his societies, counsel the embarrassed, comfort the sorrowful, encourage the desponding, strengthen the weak, and raise up the fallen. And all this daily, year after year, the number of his cares increasing as he grew older. What a mighty task! What a constant strain upon his attention, his patience, his nervous system! How could he endure it all?

Two causes operated in his favor. First, his mind was always calm, self-poised, and self-possessed. Nothing irritated him. He allowed nothing to chafe him. Said he, one day:

"I feel and grieve; but, by the grace of God, I *fret* at nothing."

He possessed another self-preserving element in his power to cast care to the winds. He did

not brood over his vexations and troubles. Said he, on one occasion :

“Ten thousand cares of various kinds were no more weight or burden to my mind than ten thousand hairs were to my head.”

Such superiority as this is the attribute of a great mind. Inferior men, like overladen vessels, strain and fret themselves against the waves which beat around them ; but Wesley, like a majestic steamship, moved calmly on through his countless duties and annoyances. The indwelling God and his native mental strength gave him the mastery.





Chapter XVII.

OLD AGE, DEATH, AND CHARACTER.

THE vigor of Wesley's physical constitution was really wonderful. Instead of bowing, as nearly all men do, under the weight of "three-score years and ten," he rose under it with renewed strength, like a giant "refreshed with new wine." He was a wonder both to his friends and to himself. "How is this?" he exclaims, when seventy-one, "I find just the same strength as I did thirty years ago. My sight is considerably better now, and my nerves firmer than they were then. I have none of the infirmities of old age, and have lost several I had in my youth."

Seven years afterward he rejoiced in feeling "just the same as when he entered his twenty-

eightth year." When four-score, he declared that he found "no more infirmities than when he was in the flower of manhood." Two years later, this silver-haired, active, marvelous old man, though still traveling, preaching, writing, and reading as busily as when in his prime, solemnly declares :

"It is now eleven years since I have felt any such thing as weariness !"

When he is eighty-four, the finger of decay makes itself felt for the first time ; and at his entrance upon his eighty-fifth year he confesses :

"I am not so agile as I was in times past. I do not run or walk as fast as I did. My sight is a little decayed. . . . I find some decay in my memory with regard to names and things lately past ; but not at all with regard to what I read or heard twenty, forty, or sixty years ago."

On his eighty-sixth birthday he fairly succumbs to the spirit of mortality, and says, half sadly :

"I now find I grow old. My sight is decayed, so that I can not read small print, unless in a strong light. My strength is decayed, so that I walk much slower than I did some years since."

Still this trembling old man continued to perform an amount of work which would make the young men of our degenerate age "groan, being burdened." He still preached two sermons a day, and for a time resumed his old practice of preaching at five o'clock in the morning!

A year later he writes: "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot." Still his imperial mind sustained him, and, though his tongue was daily parched with fever, and his feet almost touched the shore of the river of death, he rejoicingly exclaims:

"Blessed be God! I do not slack my labors! I can preach and write still."

This marvelous vigor Wesley ascribed to the peculiar care of God. His active and temperate habits, especially his five o'clock morning preaching, he contended, had much to do with it, but God's special care much more. "The grand *cause*," he said, "is the good pleasure of God, who doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. . . . I dare not impute this to natural causes. It is the will of God!"

No doubt skeptics will sneer, and contend that one man's life is as precious as another's in the sight of God. In a general sense, it is so; but no Christian will question that God throws a shield of especial protection round such great instruments of his providence as Luther, Zwingli, and Wesley, so that they are "immortal till their work is done."

No mean proof of a specially Divine care over Wesley's life is contained in the fact that the vigor of his old age was developed from a weak youthful constitution. So far from being robust in his early manhood, he tells us that, when twenty-seven, he "began spitting blood," which continued several years." His trip to Savannah cured this incipient consumption, but he was afterward "brought to the brink of death by a fever." Eleven years later, he was in "the third stage of a consumption," which in "three months," he tells us, "it pleased God to remove." When he was seventy years old, a cold prostrated him for nine days, during which his "palate and throat was greatly inflamed;" he could swallow "neither liquids nor

solids," and his "windpipe seemed nearly closed." Two years later, he had a dangerous illness occasioned by sleeping on the ground in an orchard, in hot weather. After lying insensible and "more dead than alive" several days, he recovered from this fever with "extraordinary rapidity." At about the same period he was so reduced by a serious hurt, caused by a stumbling horse throwing him on the pommel of his saddle, that one of his preachers—John Pawson—wrote, in 1773, Mr. Wesley "seems to be declining very fast; and I think there is great reason to fear that he will not be with us long."

Could a man, so seemingly fitted to be the victim of pulmonary consumption when in the prime of his manhood, become so marvelously vigorous in old age, and that, too, while doing work gigantic enough to break down the strongest of ordinary men, from natural causes alone? The regularity of his habits, his temperance in eating and drinking, his constant exercise in the open air, the fact that in seventy years he "never lost one night's sleep," and that he could sleep immediately,

whenever he willed, may partly, but can not wholly, account for it. Surely, our Wesley was correct in ascribing the "grand *cause*" of his vigor to "the good pleasure of God." It was a striking providential miracle!

One's wonder is heightened when he sees how frequently Wesley's journeys and hardships thrust him into the very jaws of death. The number and frequency of his hair-breadth escapes are astonishing. His rescue from the flames in childhood, you will readily recall. At one time, while he was in Georgia, a barge on which he was sleeping sunk at her anchorage, and he was awakened by the water flowing into his mouth! He was several times thrown over his horse's head while riding. Once his horse sunk in an Irish bog up to its shoulders. His frequent escapes from mob violence were romantically marvelous. When seventy-nine years old, he fell headlong down the stairs of Dr. Douglas's house, in Kelso, Scotland, but escaped without serious injury.

After one of his visits to his native town, he had to cross the river Trent during a terrible

storm. The boat had several passengers and three horses on board. She rolled so badly that, when in the middle of the stream, one side was under water, and men and horses were thrown down and mingled together in terrible confusion. Wesley was forced beneath an iron bar, and helplessly pinned down. Humanly speaking, there was little chance of his ever reaching the shore alive. But, at the critical moment, the horses, moved by a providential instinct, sprang overboard, the boat righted, and our Wesley was once more snatched from the mouth of death.

He had still another most marvelous escape, when seventy-one years of age, while riding in a carriage from Newcastle to an adjacent village. Mrs. Smith, his wife's daughter, and her two children, were with him. On reaching the brow of a hill, the horses, without any apparent cause, suddenly ran away. They "flew down the hill like an arrow." In a minute, the driver fell off the box. The horses then went on full speed, sometimes to the edge of the ditch on the right, sometimes on the left. A cart came up against them; they

avoided it as exactly as if the man had been on the box. A narrow bridge was at the foot of the hill ; they went directly over the middle of it. They ran up the next hill with the same speed ; many persons meeting them, but getting out of the way. Near the top of the hill was a gate which led into a farmer's yard. It stood open. They turned short and ran through it, without touching the gate on one side, or the post on the other. "I thought," says Wesley, "the gate which is on the other side of the yard, and is shut, will stop them ; but they rushed through it, as if it had been a cobweb, and galloped on through the corn-field. The little girls cried out, 'Grandpapa save us !' I told them, 'Nothing will hurt you ; do not be afraid ;' feeling no more fear or care than if I had been sitting in my study. The horses ran on until they came to the edge of a steep precipice. Just then, Mr. Smith [his son-in-law], who could not overtake us before, galloped in between. They stopped in a moment. Had they gone on ever so little, he and we must have gone down together !"

The extraordinary action of these runaway

horses led Mr. Wesley to conclude "that both evil and good angels had a large share in this transaction." Possibly they did. Certainly, the Lord's hand was in it, directly or indirectly; and Wesley was both wise and grateful in exclaiming:

"Let those give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy."

His Winter journeys on horseback to the North of England were often extremely trying and dangerous. Sometimes the roads were so slippery that his horse could scarcely keep its feet, and frequently fell on the icy roads. He writes of one of these trips: "Many a rough journey have I had before; but one like this I never had, between wind and hail, and rain and ice and snow, and driving sleet and piercing cold. But it is past; those days will return no more, and are therefore as though they had never been."

And yet, through all this, he had pushed forward, with the unflinching steadiness of a veteran moss-trooper, over some two hundred and eighty miles, at the rate of nearly fifty miles a day! But

similar days did return, again and again, through more than forty Winters ; and the most insensible reader of his Life can not help constantly wondering how he escaped from the manifold and varied perils he almost daily encountered. The only satisfactory way of accounting for the preservation of his charmed life, is to say, in his own devout spirit, "It was the will of God!"

When Wesley was eighty-five years old, he was called upon to part with his beloved brother James. He was in Shropshire when the poet died, and was therefore denied the melancholy privilege of closing his eyes. It is a curious fact, that at the moment of the great hymnist's happy death, his brother's congregation, many miles away, was singing:

"Come, let us join our friends above,
That have obtained the prize,
And, on the eagle wings of love,
To joys celestial rise.

One army of the living God,
To his command we bow ;
Part of his host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

That our venerable patriarch felt his brother's death very keenly, was shown shortly after at Bolton. He was giving out, for his second hymn, the one beginning with, "Come, O thou Traveler unknown!" When he came to the lines,

"My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with thee,"

the thought of his bereavement overpowered him. He "burst into a flood of tears, sat down in the pulpit, and hid his face in his hands."

The sight of the silvery-haired patriarch conquered by grief, so touched the congregation that the place became a valley of tears. The sermon that followed this scene was never forgotten by those who heard it.

Wesley survived his brother only three years. The leaden weight of four-score and eight years hung heavily upon his slender frame; but his spirit struggled to the last, as with the freshness of youth, to bear up the decaying body, and to maintain it in its now wearisome round of duties. At length the mortal triumphed, and Wesley began to

feel, but not to fear, that the hour of his departure was at hand.

Worn out in his blessed work, but not wearied of it, the venerable Father of Methodism preaches his last sermon in the kitchen of a magistrate at Leatherhead, eighteen miles from London, only seven days before taking his last long sleep. Two days after, he is taken to his home in City Road, London, and then his friends begin to fear that his great work is finished. He is drowsy much of the time, but in the intervals of wakefulness is cheerful and happy. While sitting up, on Sunday, he repeats these lines:

“Till glad I lay this body down,
Thy servant, Lord, attend !
And O, my life of mercy crown
With a triumphant end !”

Shortly after, in answer to a question put by Miss Ritchie, he says:

“Christ is all ! Christ is all !”

The next day his alarmed friends have no doubt that the veteran warrior is about to “doff his armor.” They tremble with apprehension ; but

he is happy, when not asleep. The day preceding his departure, he sings the hymn commencing,

"All glory to God in the sky,
And peace upon earth be restored."

Though his feet are wet with the cold waters of the river of death, his thoughts are still on the spread of the kingdom of God. Presently, his voice failing, he says, softly:

"I want to write."

They give him a pen ; but his trembling fingers can no longer give expression to his thoughts, and, letting the pen drop, he whispers:

"I can not."

"Let me write for you. Tell me what you wish to say," says Miss Ritchie, affectionately.

"Nothing, but that God is with us," he replies ; and then he adds:

"I will get up."

While they are preparing his clothes, the triumphant old soldier sings :

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath," etc. ;
and when seated in his chair he whispers :

“Lord, thou givest strength to those that can speak, and to those that can not. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that thou looses tongues.”

After this, he sings these words :

“To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree.”

Here his voice fails. He has sung his last song on earth, and, after gasping for breath, he whispers :

“Now we have done. Let us all go.”

Again he sleeps. When he awakes, he gives the key-note of his happy frame, exclaiming :

“Pray and praise !”

They obey him by offering prayer and singing. By and by he shakes hands with all present, and, with beaming eyes and happy voice, wishes each one “Farewell !”

Presently his soul seems to burn with seraphic gratitude, and, in a strong, clear voice, which sounds almost like the voice of an angel, he exclaims:

“The best of all is, God is with us !”

And then, after a brief pause, he waves his arm triumphantly, and repeats the joyous words:

“The best of all is, God is with us!”

Another night of gradually declining strength, during which he frequently repeats his glad keynote, “Pray and praise,” and then his hour strikes. Eleven of his friends stand, with weeping eyes and throbbing hearts, watching round his bed. At ten o’clock, on Wednesday, March 2, 1791, this worn-out hero of unnumbered spiritual battles cries, “Farewell!” and then the “silver cord is loosed,” the “golden bowl” is broken, and his aspiring spirit ascends to its reward.

A beautiful death! There was no fear, terror, resistance, or sadness in it; nothing but calm courage, grateful love, implicit trust, and joyful hope—a glorious end to a grand life.

It is scarcely too much to say, that not only all London, but all England, was moved as the tidings of our Wesley’s death spread from lip to lip; for, while the tens of thousands in his societies loved him, people of all classes had learned to reverence his great character, and to look with respectful

wonder on the ecclesiastical structure which had risen, almost unbidden, under his hands. Such was the sensation in London, that, to prevent the gathering of an unmanageable multitude at his funeral, his friends resolved, twelve hours before the time, to inter him at the unusual hour of five in the morning. Even at that early hour, and with notices carefully limited, hundreds were present to witness his burial, behind the City-road Chapel.

The "Story of a Wonderful Life" is ended. The despised "Father of the Holy Club," the persecuted itinerant, the hard-working founder of Methodism, has become a glorified saint in heaven!

Wesley must be ranked with minds of the highest class. Perhaps his most distinguishing quality was "his genius for government," which, as Macaulay put it, "was not inferior to that of Richelieu." But he also excelled in all other high qualities. His character was eminently symmetrical and admirably rounded. He had profound powers of reflection; was very clear in his perceptions; had rare logical ability and sound judgment—an

extraordinary memory, a fine imagination, a keen wit, and very correct taste. His courage was heroic, his sympathies quick, deep, and exquisitely tender; his patience was unwearied, his meekness rare, his humility beautiful, his charity perfect, his persistence unconquerable. He was temperate in all things, and in self-denial he was almost an anchorite. His passions and appetites were held in by an iron will. His cheerfulness was inexhaustible, his manner courteous, his industry unsurpassed. His life was unspotted, his piety deep and unobtrusive. That he loved God with all his heart, is evident from his daily acts of faith and love; but as the devoted Bradburn said:

“His modesty prevented him saying much concerning his own religious feelings. In public he hardly ever spoke of the state of his own soul; but, in 1781, he told me that his experience might almost at any time be expressed in the following lines:

“O Thou, who camest from above,
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn,
 With inextinguishable blaze ;
 And, trembling, to its source return,
 In humble love and fervent praise.'”

Had he no faults? Certainly he had; for, great though he was, he was compassed about with the infirmities of the flesh. As you have seen, he sometimes erred in his judgments of men, and of women particularly. He was somewhat credulous, believed in ghosts and kindred supernatural phenomena—a weakness common to other great men of his times.* Possibly he erred in holding on so exclusively to the power of appointing his preachers; but of this I am not quite sure. Doubtless he believed that the best good of his societies required him to hold on so tenaciously to his authority. Tyerman, his latest biographer,

* We have not related the account of certain unexplained noises which occurred in the parsonage at Epworth, shortly after Wesley went to the Charter-house; or given place to any of the numerous stories of the supernatural mentioned in his Journal, for the reason that the plan and scope of our work left us without space sufficient to discuss their character. We will only say here that, personally, we have no faith in the supernatural origin of the aforesaid noises.

says he was "naturally irritable," and that, calling the attention of one of his preachers to a dock, one day, he said :

"Touch that !"

"Do you feel any thing ?" he asked, after the preacher had obeyed him.

"No replied the brother, divining what his chief was aiming at.

"Touch that, then," said Wesley, pointing to a nettle.

The brother did so, and was stung.

"Now, Tommy," remarked Wesley, "some men are like docks,—say what you will to them, they are stupid and insensible. Others are like nettles,—touch them, and they resent it. Tommy, you are a nettle ; and, for my part, I would rather have to do with a nettle than a dock."

If, by this stinging "object-lesson," Wesley intended a confession of his own natural nettlesomeness, his record makes it pretty certain that Divine grace enabled him so to control it, that it stung none but the willful and the persistent wrong-doer.

If he had other faults, they were venial—the

excess of his many virtues, and not the offspring of a perverted will. As you have seen, he had a few weaknesses ; but, put faults and weaknesses together, they were but as a few small, unseemly objects on a landscape otherwise so lovely that the beholder, enraptured with its manifold beauties, fails to take serious note of such trifling defects.

Wesley's preaching was not equal to Whitefield's in eloquence ; but in matter, and especially in power over the conscience, it excelled it. His voice, though not loud, was clear, and had great compass. It reached to the farthest limit of the vast crowds he so often addressed in the open air. His manner in the pulpit was strikingly graceful, dignified, and attractive. His style was concise and plain. His thoughts were clear as crystal. His themes varied with his audiences. Upon the rich and gay he often poured down the claims of the law, like the fiery rain of Sodom. In the ears of the poor and miserable, his flute-like tones gave utterance to the sweet and pitiful words of the loving Redeemer. At nearly all times he preached with an unction and power which proved that

he constantly enjoyed the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

But we must drop the pen. The English Church, which once drove him from her pulpits, has recently done tardy justice to his memory, by providing a place for his and his brother's monuments in Westminster Abbey, among the noblest of Britain's dead. But his best monument is Methodism. His highest honor is the fact that millions of souls, all over the earth, are daily benefited by the influences which he set in motion; and other millions will be, to the end of time. May the reader emulate his virtues! His greatness is unattainable by ordinary mortals; but that absolute self-devotion to God and to works of charity which distinguished him, is placed, by Divine grace, within reach of all. May the reader seek it with Wesley's pertinacity, and, having gained it, may he retain it with true Wesleyan tenacity!

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Wise, Daniel, 1813-1898.

The story of a wonderful life: or, Pen pictures of most interesting incidents in the life of the celebrated John Wesley. Adapted to the tastes and wants of the people. By Daniel Wise, D. D. Cincinnati, J. B. & Pye, [pref. 1873]

1 p. l., 318 p. front., plates, port. 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

1. Wesley, John, 1703-1791.--Juvenile literature

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